

QUEER THINGS ABOUT PERSIA

BY

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FORMERLY OF THE LEGATION OF FRANCE
AT THE COURT OF PERSIA

AND

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"THE SECRETS OF THE VATICAN" ETC. ETC.

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OLD PERSIAN BOOKBINDING OF FIRDOUSI'S "SHAHNAMEH"
'From the Collection of the Author'

PREFACE

I HAVE never written a book whose title was so much criticised as my recently published *Secrets of the Vatican*. But no one, I think, will say that *Queer Things about Persia* is a misnomer. As its name implies, it is written on the lines of my *Queer Things about Japan*. In other words, leaving completeness to those who have had greater opportunities of studying the country, it is content to be characteristic.

It will be noticed that this book is written in the first person singular.

I have not been in Persia, whereas Mr. de Lorey spent two years there as a member of the Legation of France at the Court of Teheran.

It is right, therefore, that the descriptions should be his in form as they are in actuality. Our method of collaboration was very simple and direct. I suggested to him a general scheme for the book, drawn up on the lines of my *Queer Things about Japan*. He considered how far this was applicable to the conditions of Persia, and produced the actual scheme. Upon this we worked.

Our method of work was for him to spend so many hours or days in thinking out the subject of a chapter.

When he had arranged his notes, he dictated and I wrote down the chapter, and this time it was I who made the suggestions. But the alterations I suggested were as few as possible, because I felt that each alteration detracted from the unity of his conception. I venture to think that both the indolent reader who merely wishes to be thoroughly amused, and the more serious person who wishes to get an idea of Persia, will be equally grateful to me, for seldom has so fresh a picture been presented of that distant and unapproachable country, which has preserved its individuality unimpaired since the days when the Ruler of Persia would have overrun the world if a Spartan King had not held the passes of Thermopylæ, and Athens had not laid the foundations of her fame with her dazzling victories of Marathon and Salamis. Xerxes and Darius, Artaxerxes and Cyrus, are all household words. From Xenophon, who was one of the ten thousand Greeks who all but overthrew the great King in the heart of his empire, and when they lost their leader, fought their way back to the sea where Constantinople stands to-day, we take familiar words like *paradise* and *satrap*, just as in our own day we have taken khaki from *khak*—the Persian word for mud.

What Greeks fighting under the Persian Prince Cyrus nearly achieved at the end of the fifth century B.C., men of Greek race achieved less than a century later under Alexander of Macedon, the wonder of the world. He attacked and threw down Persia, and Asia was at his feet.

Behind the ruins of Persia rose Parthia, whose dashing horse archers outmanœuvred the iron legionaries of Rome. And Persia itself under Chosroes was a greater conqueror in the West than in her early zenith under Xerxes. But neither on these ancient military glories, when Persia ravaged the world, nor on her last great triumph, when Nadir Shah swept as a conqueror through India and brought back the Peacock Throne—most glittering of the trophies of history—as a record, do we dwell in these pages. Still less shall we linger to untwine the tortuous skein of Eastern politics. But of the life of the Shah, as the last of the dazzling monarchs of the Golden East who has survived to show us the splendour of Asia at the Court of the Great Mogul, innumerable details are given.

This book, in fact, aims at representing the life of the Shah and the life of his people—it is in the extravagances of both that we have sought *Queer Things about Persia*.

The Persian is very little changed in the centuries which have elapsed since the Arabian Nights were written. What was true of his neighbours then, comes near being true about him to-day. He is a “courtly primitive.” His manners are very perfect even for an Asiatic gentleman. He has an esprit not often vouchsafed to Asiatics; but he can also be Asiatically cruel, treacherous, and untruthful, and has only passive courage: and he is indolent and unpatriotic, though there are many brilliant exceptions.

Besides his delightful courtesy and vivacity, the Persian has many other good qualities, such as his love of poetry and literature, his love of flowers, his love of beauty generally. He is æsthetic, not only in his tastes, but in his life. He is a fine horseman and a lover of sport. He is, in fact, a survival of the mediæval, a twentieth-century troubadour hedged in by harems.

This book aims, on the one hand, at describing the life of the Persian—from the Shah in his palace to the house-guard who receives only a few shillings a month ; and, on the other hand, at describing the surroundings of the European residents in Teheran. In the latter category Mr. de Lorey gives us, with engaging directness, his own experiences in taking a house, engaging servants, buying horses, wandering about the streets, shopping in the bazars, learning to speak and write Persian, and visiting Persians in their homes. And he winds up with a description of his visit to the Caucasus and Persian Kurdistan, which brought him in contact with a life and types strange and interesting even for Persia. Here we have the sublime Peak of Ararat, the ancient city of Tiflis, and Ur of the Chaldees before us. And Mr. de Lorey's narrative becomes positively thrilling as he describes his ride through the country haunted by the brigand Shahsevids into Tabriz.

Mr. de Lorey has many stories to tell—sometimes they are of adventure, as in the episode when he was held up by the seven armed horsemen in the Pass, or when he went home and found a crowd outside his

house clamouring for his blood, because his servant, Abd-Oullah, had taken a Mohammedan woman into the house ; sometimes they are illustrative of modern Persian life, such as the story how they found a boy to take its place when the cat which was the Shah's mascot died ; or the story of the Governor who, when a peasant was insensible to his graciousness, shot him like a crow ; or the story of the Frenchman who had to turn Mohammedan or die because he was discovered with a Mohammedan woman ; or a Persian version of the *Taming of the Shrew*. Sometimes they are old Persian stories, such as the Tale of the Forty Parrots ; of King Solomon's Adventure with a Djinn ; of the traveller who lost a bag of gold at the well ; of the astrologer who told a man everything that was going to happen to him in his whole life, though his gift of prophecy did not reveal that his own wife was at that moment being carried off by her lover ; of the rich merchant who divorced his wife once too often ; and of the grateful dragon ; with a score of others.

Mr. de Lorey has much to say of the humours of the Persian police ; of the humours of his servants, one of whom discontinued being a tailor to become his valet, and another left his service to become a colonel ; of the humours of Persian race-meetings and the Persian army, and Nasr-ed-Din's methods of recruiting his harem.

But the book is not given up to humours ; there are vivid descriptions of the streets and squares, the

palaces, mosques, and gardens of Teheran; of the Shah's and Grand Vizier's receptions; of hashish-smoking at the Persian princes'; of the machinery of Government, and justice; of the bastinado and executions; of the bazars; of the *hammam* or Turkish baths; of the caravanseraies or inns; of the making and selling of Persian carpets, and the like.

Mr. de Lorey has much to say on the subject of religions, in which Persia is rich, with its Shiites, Babis, Nestorians, Chaldees, and Fire-worshippers. He dwells upon the importance of Ali and the twelve Imams in Persia, on the popularity of pilgrimages, and on the extraordinariness of the religious plays which are performed in the month of Moharrem, one of which he translates. The chapter on the persecution of the Babis shows how primitive the Persians still remain, almost as much as the details of harem life do.

Mr. de Lorey has very wisely devoted a large portion of his attention to the position of women in Persia. His account of the Teheran Palace of the King of Kings; of the Peacock Throne whose jewels are valued at six millions sterling; of the huge terrestrial globe made of solid gold encrusted with jewels; of the Shah's diplomatic receptions and reviews of his troops, —will have less fascination for many a reader than the detailed account of his harem, derived from the doctor of his favourite wife. The many pages which deal with the harem of the Shah and the harems of his subjects are rich in queer things, but then, if ever a

book was exactly named, this is. It is full of queer facts about street dogs; hashish-smoking; the tricks of Dervishes; the management of water-pipes (*kalyan*); the odd garments of both men and women; the Persian tea-house; the educated nightingale; musicians; acrobats; wrestlers; the dancers in the harems; Persian food, *pilaws* and *chilaws*, and the deadly cucumber and curds; banquets; gambling; the Persian's unrivalled skill in lying; his ideas upon woman's beauty; the language of flowers, vegetables, and spices; the punishments of women; temporary marriages; Persian weddings, divorces and polygamy; the Shah's unique sleeping arrangements; the charms taken by women in order to have children; old women go-betweens; the Shah's craze for novelties and being photographed; the suite of thousands that accompanies the Shah when he is travelling; the fate of reforms; the newspaper which only lived a day; the religious conspiracy (or revolt) against the tobacco concession; the Shah's letter-boxes and telephone offices for complaints from his subjects; the Persian's idea of water-works and gas-works; his system for robbing the mails; his calendar and his faith in astrologers. The late Shah appears in a hundred different aspects: now as holding auctions in bazars, now as putting off the races to which he has asked the whole diplomatic body, because he has sneezed once and he is unable to sneeze twice.

Atmosphere is what Mr. de Lorey aimed at.

In this book no attempt has been made to give an

exhaustive account of Persia. Mr. de Lorey's aim has been to present Persia as it presented itself to the eyes of one who in the earliest years of manhood was thrown by the chances of diplomatic life into daily contact with an ancient and effete civilisation, which was generally most comic when it was meant to be serious.

Sheltered by diplomatic jealousies, the Sick Man of the Middle East, like the sick men of Turkey in the Near East, and China in the Far East, has not yet felt obliged to put his house in order. His soldiers, though armed with rifles and clothed with theatrical copies of European uniforms, are still disorderly levies; his Parliament, which has begun so well, is only a creation of yesterday; and his highest moments of religious exaltation are at the extraordinary religious drama, in which the murder of the family of Ali is enacted for the edification of the orthodox Shiite, with such a small regard for probabilities that the actors, who are taking the parts of the murderers, forget themselves, and join in the groans and tears of the audience over the death of the Imam.

DOUGLAS SLADEN.

POSTSCRIPTUM

As the book was going to press, Mr. de Lorey had the good fortune to meet a Persian Diplomatist of the highest rank, who had just arrived in Europe from

his native country. He had some surprising disclosures to make. "If I had not seen these things," he exclaimed vehemently, "I could not have believed them myself!"

The Revolution that took place a few months ago, contrary to all expectations, has been a reality. The Clergy, who had always been against every kind of reform, have been found in the van of the present movement. The least-suspected *Mollahs* have suddenly thrown away the mask of dissimulation, and have shown that they had progressive ideas and a knowledge of modern world-politics of which no one would have suspected them. Parliament, which was regarded by Europeans as a pale reflection of the ineffective Russian Duma, is proving fruitful. Several very important reforms have already been inaugurated, the most extraordinary of which is the liberty of the Press. Thanks to this, from day to day sixty papers have sprung up, in which even the Shah, who has hitherto been sacred, is openly criticised. Another not less astounding reform is the foundation of schools for girls in Persia, because the idea of allowing women to be really instructed is completely foreign to the old Persian. The Shah is frightened by the swiftness of events, and has recalled from exile to his aid the strongest man of Persia, Amin-es-Sultan, the former Grand Vizier, who, in spite of four years' travel over the world, remains true to the old Persian traditions of government, which he practised for so many years. It will be seen

from this that the Shah's attitude to the reforms seems to be one of yielding where he cannot refuse. It remains to be seen whether the aspirations of the Young Persian party will be strong enough to overcome his resistance.

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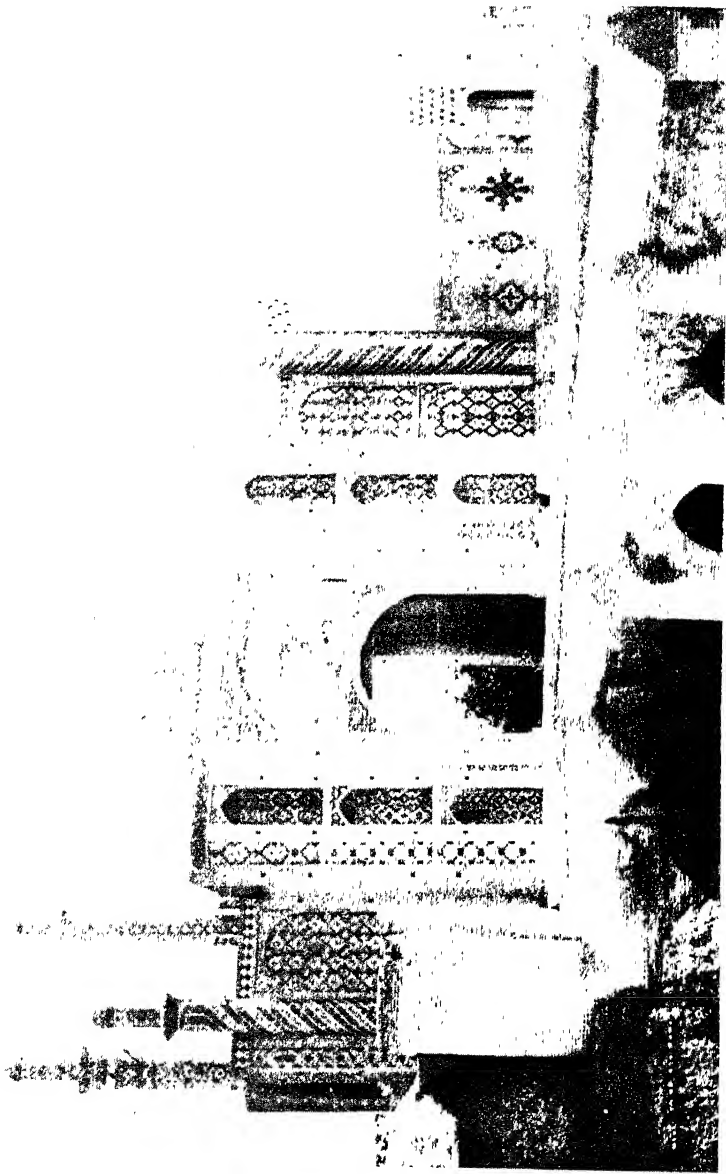
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The Beautiful Gate of Teheran

QUEER THINGS ABOUT PERSIA

CHAPTER I

FIRST GLIMPSES OF TEHERAN

TEHERAN has no distant enchanting view. The visions of minarets, domes, and cypress gardens which make your heart beat high as you draw near a city of the fantastic Orient rise not before you, and when at length she reveals herself at the last turn of the road, she has nothing to offer but a mud wall, the arch of a gate, and a fringe of planes and poplars.

That is the first disillusion at the threshold of the Centre of the Universe. When you have compounded with the customs agents—there is a tariff for not having your baggage examined—and are free to enter the meandering streets, walls of grey mud are your horizon still, and the people who walk between them wear mud-coloured clothes. The term *khaki* is a Persian word meaning muddy. That is the second disillusion.

• After having travelled so far and suffered so many hardships, I expected my fatigues to be dissipated by some touch of the Arabian Nights, and felt oppressed

at the everlasting grey. The long, shady boulevards only showed me that the Shah had been in Europe; I saw little else but dirty soldiers, with uniforms vaguely copied from the armies of the West, shambling along in heelless slippers and looking as unmartial as sandwich-men; droves of donkeys of the same muddy grey, bowed down with their burdens of dingy bricks, and dun dogs grey with dust, which looked askance at a stranger and grudged him a welcome to that sombre, sad, inhospitable-looking city of Islam. To complete the gloominess of the picture, the women, who are the flowers of our crowds, are in Persia black, shapeless phantoms stealing silently along in the shadow of the walls.

The hotel where I put up was a small, one-storeyed house built round a courtyard with a sunken garden, and was kept by an Englishman. The rooms were small but fairly clean, and the food was of no nationality. The English thought it might be French, which would have been an insult to any "chef"; the French thought it German; the Persian knew that it was not his. But even that was luxurious for a few days after the hardships and starvations of the road.

The servants were, of course, natives, and none of them could speak a word of any intelligible language, even Persian. They belonged to a Turkish tribe which rested under the stigma of being honest, which is not in the category of Persian virtues. Their dress was as formal as it was filthy, a long dark blue frock-coat with gilt buttons, and a huge lambskin hat, or *kolah*.

As to the guests, they were of all shades, from the military-looking English superintendent of the Anglo-Indian Telegraphs to the Polish electrical engineer, employed as a last resort in repairing the first motor car that ever struggled through the dust of Persia. Curiously enough, the language spoken in that English hotel inhabited by cosmopolitans was French. And if the French was indifferent, the conversation was brilliant, as it always is in Persia, thanks to the exhilarating climate.

In the sitting-room, recalling vaguely its prototypes in Brixton boarding-houses, a piano, tired with excursions to various harems, was kept in countenance by wax flowers wedged into beautiful old Persian jars; while a cuckoo clock contrasted with a finely carved brass tray of Ispahan.

The grey evening fell on that grey day. I was glad when I found my head upon my pillow, and, wrapped in my disenchantment, I went to sleep.

When morning broke, I repeated to myself the words of the wise Eastern king who gave the world his matchless Book of Psalms: "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." For the bright sun of November shone in the pale blue skies. Distant sounds of music and rejoicing pervaded the atmosphere. The grey dream flew away like a moth of the night. That sun was the *Soleil Roi*—the Sun of the East. Had I really taken the first step into the Orient? A cup of delicious tea flavoured with Shiraz lemon, brought by a "smiling slave," answered me in the affirmative.

4 QUEER THINGS ABOUT PERSIA

I rushed into the street and breathed in the pure air. It was a long avenue, in which the grey walls on each side were lost behind a close hedge of trees, planted haphazard, with elms, mulberries, and poplars, all wooed into delicate robes of green by the crystal water running at their feet.

I went wandering without a guide; I flew to the music as an insect flies to a light. I came upon a great crowd—and pushed my way through it. I must say, to the honour of that crowd, that they were almost eager to let me go in front. To my astonishment, I found myself within twelve paces of the Shah. The Shadow of God was sitting on a folding carpet-chair with an ineffable fringe, in the open portal of the Gate of Diamonds, which leads to the harem. A group of enormously tall eunuchs made a background with their black robes and resigned countenances. On his right was one of his young brothers, dressed as a general; on his left, one of his sons and a dwarf; in front of him he had a cheap folding gipsy table.

His Majesty was staring into vacancy, nervously pulling his moustaches. He was supposed to be reviewing some of his troops, who marched past within a couple of yards of him, headed by their bands, all playing different tunes, European-Oriental and Oriental-European at the same time. The soldiers might have stepped out of an Opera Comique, the filing past was endless; the Shah sat like the automaton of a king.

When the review was over I wandered about the streets. The world was no longer grey. The sun of



Tartar Tribesmen from the north of Persia

the East had transmuted it, but I could not see in the people the type of beauty for which Persia is a proverb. The reason was not far to seek : I soon learned that in the north of Persia there are very few Persians. The average inhabitant of these provinces is a mixture of Turk and Turkoman, with very little Persian in him. These northern people do not even dress like Persians. Since the Kajar dynasty came into power, the national costume has been replaced by ugly frock-coats with full gathered skirts. In the crowd were a number of the black phantoms ; they were true daughters of Eve, some of them, for they lifted the white veils, which hung over their faces, a little, to watch. But no torturing of my imagination could poetise creatures as void of form as the earth on the day of its creation.

As I was going back to the hotel—guessing my way, because I could not ask anybody—I was suddenly pushed aside by odd-looking men in gold-laced scarlet liveries and caps with cockatoo crests made of peacock's feathers. They were the *Shater*—i.e. the runners who precede the carriage of the Shah—and soon I saw His Majesty in a landau, surrounded by troops, on his way, as I afterwards learned, to pay his annual visit to the Grand Vizier. I made a bow, and was rather astonished at his not answering it. He glared at me without moving. I learned in time that I ought to be very gratified, for that it was a great condescension for the Shadow of God to lower his eyes to regard any human being. In Persia he never answers a salute in public.

Every year on his birthday the Shah honours the Grand Vizier with a call. It is a great honour for the Vizier, but a very expensive one, because first of all he has to welcome the King of Kings with a present of gold coins, which cannot be less than a thousand pounds, and sometimes mounts to two or three thousand. And secondly, the entire suite of the Shah help themselves to anything they fancy (which is everything they see). Knowing this, the Grand Vizier has of course put all his valuables away, and only very cheap things, bought for the purpose (as at London sales), are left about for these locusts.

The Grand Vizier considers these visits as a sort of tax, and takes them very well. It is not everyone who comes out of them so well. Sometimes when the Shah thinks he may do a good bargain he goes and pays a visit to a very rich man. The present is discussed in advance by chamberlains; and some functionaries have been nearly ruined by the condescension of the sovereign.

With the night came my first experience of the Arabian Nights: I was invited to an evening party given by the Grand Vizier to celebrate the birthday of the Shah.

His palace stands in the new part of Teheran, near the English and French Legations, in the middle of a park, between two huge artificial lakes of formal shapes; it is two storeys high, built of a kind of marble brought from the mountains of Elbruz, and erected from the

designs of a Frenchman living in Teheran, who, without being an architect, has transformed all the new architecture of the town. It is surrounded by colonnades and verandahs. All the park was enchantingly illuminated with a profusion of fairy lights of all colours and Japanese lanterns, and even the lakes were covered with arabesques of these lights. It was a really fairy-like sight. A grand sweep of steps took us to the first floor, where the reception rooms were. They were huge and gorgeous; all the walls were covered with panels of Japanese silk embroideries, but the curtains, as well as the chairs and sofas, were Early Victorianly-European. As a European, I felt ashamed to see how ugly these things of ours looked in the company of the marvellous carpets and embroideries of the East. Still there were not very many European things in such bad taste as you might expect to see in rich Oriental establishments, for the Grand Vizier is a man of good taste.

On some of the tables were really beautiful sets of chessmen, made of ivory and other valuable substances, on boards of crimson and white—real works of art, brought from Japan. They were not the only things which showed what a taste for Japanese things the Vizier had, for the fireworks, which brought the party to a conclusion, were specially imported from Japan.

These reception rooms were crowded with Persian officials in gorgeous cashmere shawls with ornaments of precious stones, mingled with the diplomatic corps

in their gold-laced uniforms, and a few European ladies, amongst whom only the minority were up-to-date in their costumes, because fashions take several years to find their way to Persia. There were several orchestras in the garden and in the rooms, none of them using native instruments or music; they were military bands, and they played our music strictly in their own way.

A few Europeans were dancing; the Persians looked on with astonishment, mixed with a little Eastern contempt for the dancers, because they cannot imagine anyone dancing unless he is hired to do it. Dancing in Persia is not an amusement but a trade. There was much walking about and talking and intriguing going on, because it is a good opportunity to meet people. Even diplomats do not forget that. It was more of a spectacle than anything else.

There was a buffet and a supper, served in the European fashion, and the Grand Vizier took a vast deal of trouble as host and hostess, for naturally no Persian woman appears at a public gathering. The servants were not so gorgeous as one would expect. They were scarcely noticeable, being dressed in very dark and plain Persian frock-coats, and standing about they would be taken for guests if it were not for their humble looks and folded hands.

It was a unique sight; even with these touches of Europe I could not but think of the Arabian Nights, especially when I retired to the balcony to watch the

fireworks. The skies themselves made the greatest display with their own fireworks—the stars—and they seemed to be in competition with the illuminations of the gardens. I was gazing at stars above and stars below, when suddenly in the distance, on the top of the fortifications, some of the most astounding effects that fire has ever been able to produce kept us in breathless admiration.

It was on a night like this a few years ago, when the fête was at its height, that a courier from the Shah brought to the same Grand Vizier in the same palace a letter from His Majesty. It began with words of thanks: "His Majesty expresses his gratitude to the man who helped him to ascend the throne, and who has governed the country so well since that time." But it added that the cares of State must have been so heavy for him that a little rest would do him good, and that he had better go and spend some time in the country.

The Grand Vizier understood what it meant. He was dressed in a pearl embroidered shawl robe, and wore in his belt the *calamdan* (in which the Persian carries his pen and ink) of gold, enamelled, and encrusted with precious stones, which are the insignia of his office and rank. He took these off and sent them back to the Shah, and picking up his seal, which was a sort of seal of State, broke it. The crowd did not know what was happening. Only a few Ministers, amongst whom were the British and the Russian, had been apprised of it, and

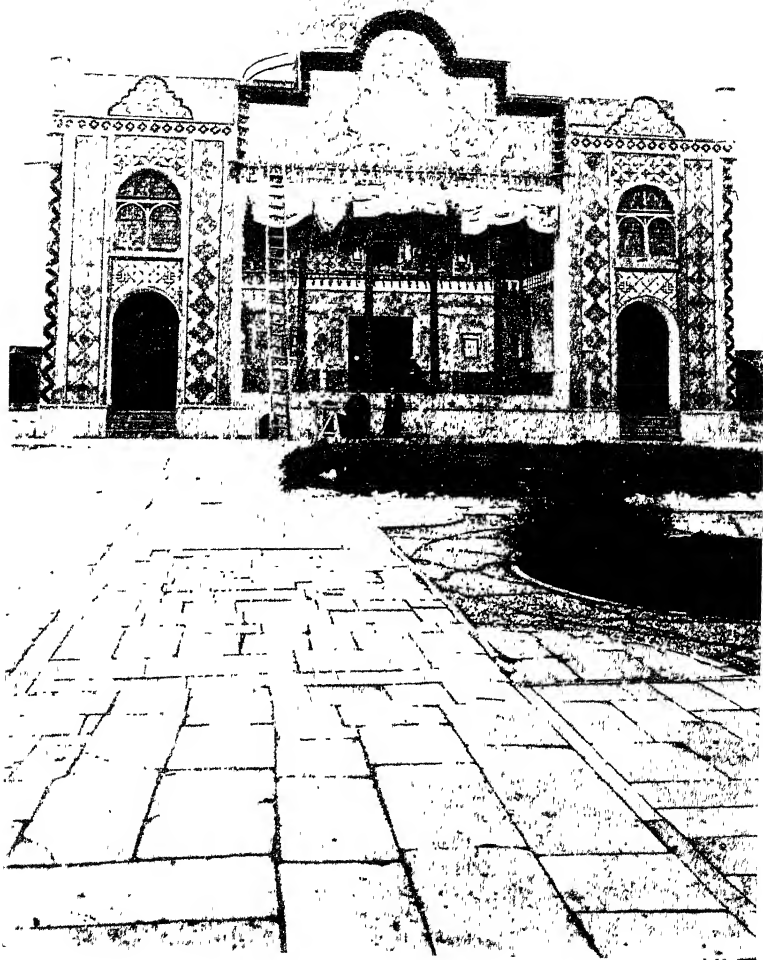
they promised their protection to the fallen Vizier, who knew what had been the fate up to that time of all the dismissed Viziers—death.

No consideration would have made him drink a cup of coffee, or even a glass of water.

One of the entertainments of the present evening was listening to a phonograph which had just been sent to the Grand Vizier as a present. He was very keen about it, and himself superintended the management. He had all the principal ladies, amongst them the wife of the English Minister, arranged on sofas in front of it. First he put on a laughing song, which the Europeans as well as the Persians enjoyed very much. It was not the same with the next song, a French music-hall ditty of a decidedly improper character. The ladies were obliged to smile out of politeness to the Grand Vizier. Their efforts to conceal their fear of what might come next—and, in fact, was coming—were a much better play than you generally get in Persia.

About two the fête was over, and very Occidental and broken-down-looking cabs were waiting to take us from that Oriental palace.

I entered the hotel in a very different mood from the night before: I had lifted a little corner of the veil of the magnificent East.



Tomb of Shahzadeh Houssein in Kasvin.

CHAPTER II

LEARNING TO SPEAK AND WRITE PERSIAN

Mirza-Ali-Akbar

ONE of my first occupations was to learn Persian, of which I had the average insignificant knowledge that one achieves after having studied it a little in Europe. As I consider that the first thing to do towards learning a language is to cultivate the ear, I made an arrangement with a Mirza (a title given to all people who can read and write, like the *clerks* of the Middle Ages) to come every day to read Persian stories aloud to me for two hours. He was a Persian of the Gulf or from the border of Balouchistan, and had spent several years in India ; he had rather a military appearance and wore a military cap, and I believe my servants gave him a military title—called him Captain, or something of the kind. But the connection was, I believe, purely imaginary. The most military thing that I noticed about him was his punctuality : that very often made me furious. He came regularly at eight o'clock, and after having said good-morning, in Persian and in English, he sat down on the floor near my bed, and began to read in a loud and distinct voice. At first I listened without understanding

a word ; but little by little words struck me, because they recurred very often, and then I asked the meaning, and if it happened by a lucky chance to be one of the words the Mirza knew in English, I was sure never to forget its meaning.

After a month of that cultivation of my ear, I began to read with the man stories for little children in a nice little book, bought in the bazars, with pictures of a primitiveness that made it a sort of guess-work. I saved several months' work by the fact that I could read and write Arabic characters, which the Persians have used since the Mussulman conquest.

My next and more interesting exercise was to learn by heart pieces of poetry. The first was a poem by Sa'di from the Gulistan.

After three months of that impressionist teaching, when, thanks to the Mirza, I knew enough Persian to make myself understood with great difficulty, I committed the ingratitude of thanking him and taking another teacher. One of the excuses I gave myself was that, being an opium-smoker, he frightened me ; he had such an alarming vagueness in his ideas and in his wandering eye. His successor, Mirza Ali Akbar, had the supreme merit of being a true Persian, born in Shiraz, the City of the Poets. He had a very poetical turn of mind. He was small and delicate, not only in build but in manners ; and had a fine aquiline nose, piercing black eyes, a drooping moustache and a little beard, carefully cut and shorn, with the edge made more regular by plucking.

He wore the national Persian robes, and had always in his belt a *calamdan* for his pens and ink, and a little roll of paper to write on.

His mind was quite open, and he had not that loathing for Christians, that feeling of disgust for their uncleanness, which generally characterise the Shiites. And though he did not know much about it, he had a certain admiration for Europe. He was a man of fifty, married, and the father of a family; a fact which he never mentioned, probably because he only had daughters. His striking personality made me take a great liking to his company; I engaged him to come every day, and was glad to find him in my house every time that I returned to it. He also went for walks with me, explaining to me many Persian customs and telling me the names of things as we passed them and of the trees and flowers, for which he had the love of a true Persian. He generally carried a bunch in his hands, and very often when he came he brought me some flowers, an apple, a pomegranate, or a lime from his native town, which enjoys the highest reputation. This was to express welcome.

Though the appointments of that learned man probably did not bring him over four pounds a month, he was always well dressed and smoked good cigarettes.

The first book we translated together was the Diary of Nasr-ed-din Shah's travels in Europe. It was very curious and interesting to me to observe how the Persian sovereign looked at our customs; and I could not help

smiling when I saw Gladstone called a Vizier, or the Kaiser a Padishah.

I took down dictation every day, to learn the Persian spelling and to improve my writing. Mirza Ali Akbar used to invent stories in which difficult words that he wanted me to learn occurred often—an excellent method.

To write Persian is quite an art, and since writing there has as much value as a picture, and even more, it may fairly be classed among the arts.

The apparatus consists, firstly, of a *calamdan*—a long, narrow box with a drawer in it such as children use for pencils in England, painted with brilliant designs in lacquer. At one end of it is a little ink-pot and in it are the *calam*, the reeds which they use as pens, a pair of scissors to cut the paper, and a little piece of Indian ink. Secondly, of a roll of stiff, thick shining paper looking almost like parchment.

The first thing to learn is how to cut the *calam* into a pen. The Persians still use that primitive pen with which we are familiar in the Bible—the reed. When you start a new one, it is about a quarter of an inch thick and eight inches long; but as you cut it like a pencil, it grows shorter every day. And learning to cut it is like learning to tie an evening tie—you spoil many before you succeed.

The next thing to know is how to prepare the ink. It is rubbed with water in a saucer and poured into the ink-pot.

The third thing is how to cut the paper. Persians attach great importance to this: they cut it the exact length they require. They are as particular about this as the English are about paper and envelopes matching.

The fourth thing is how to hold the paper and the pen, because there are no tables in Persia, and they write on their hands. The paper is held in a half cylinder, and as the Persians write from right to left they let the paper unfold, and when they come to about an inch and a half from the left-hand edge they let the line take a bold curve upwards. They always leave a good margin on the right-hand side, and if they have not calculated the length of their page well, they end the letter by writing on the margin, upside down or diagonally. But they never use the back of the page, because that would smudge the writing when it is reversed, being Indian ink.

When a Persian wishes to erase something he has written, he does not scratch it out, he licks it off with his tongue.

The average Persian's writing is terribly difficult to read, very different from print, for he forgets to put in the points which constitute the difference between the letters. So, since there is no punctuation in Persian, reading an ordinary letter is pure guess-work, and few Europeans ever achieve it.

Of course, Persians have no blotting-paper; they have not even got so far as using the sand pepper-box. They often embellish their writing by inserting

16 QUEER THINGS ABOUT PERSIA

words in red ink. They do not sign their letters, but use a seal, and instead of sealing the foot of the letter they put the date at the foot and then lick the paper at the back of the date and impress their seal on it. They rub the ink into the seal with the finger. They press the paper into the seal like an antiquarian taking a rubbing from a brass.

The Persians knew nothing of envelopes until they were introduced from Europe a few years ago. Their letters used to be folded and fastened with a wafer.

CHAPTER III

MY HOUSE IN TEHERAN

EUROPEANS live in a special quarter, which was built in the time of Nasr-ed-din, in the north-eastern part of the town.

First of all a few Legations were built in the Street of the Legations, which takes its name from them. Little by little houses for Europeans were erected by Persians, as no European can own any property in Persia outside of the Legations. There were very few houses to let. And it was only with considerable difficulty, and after seeing several horribly uncomfortable places, that I settled in a little house belonging to one of the servants of the British Legation. He was one of the *gholams* of the Legation—a sort of groom who rides in front of the carriage.

It was in a very narrow cul-de-sac, up which no carriage could pass, because a little stream was running down the centre with trees on each side of it. There were, of course, no windows opening on the street. The house was entered through an arched gateway, paved with cobble-stones and built of red brick, which had a thick wooden door studded with nails. The stable adjoined the

gateway on the right, and on the left there was a room for the guards; behind there was a square paved courtyard with flower-beds let into it round the fountain in the centre. It contained a few acacia trees and many roses. It had a graceful colonnade on one side, with a sitting-room leading off it. There were other rooms round the courtyard, all of about the same size and all equally uncomfortable and inconvenient, they were so long and narrow, and consisted chiefly of French windows, which went down to the floor, and fitted so badly that the wind and the rain came in. On one side a little staircase led down to the *zirzamin* or summer apartment, faced by the *abambar* or cistern, where the water is stored, which comes down from the mountains in subterranean conduits and is distributed twice a week.

Although there is no real danger for Europeans in Teheran, it is the custom to have soldiers guarding their houses. I adopted the custom, and instructed the Mirza Ali Akbar to go and ask the colonel of the Karaouls to send me four men, and make a contract with him. This may appear pompous, but it is not so really. It is an inexpensive luxury, for the Karaouls receive only one toman a month each, a toman being four shillings, and you have to give up to them only the room built specially for the purpose at the door, which in my house was in front, corresponding to the stables. This room was rather large, but its aspect was uninviting, it was so like the dwelling of a troglodyte, with its walls of mud, its ceiling consisting only of rough beams which



Lazes of the Caucasus.

supported the roof, blackened by smoke and hanging with cobwebs. Only one little porthole, high up in the wall, shared with a low door the honour of lighting this den. The porthole not only admitted light and air, it also let out the smoke. The room had no proper floor, but just the unlevelled ground.

I said to the Mirza, "You must offer another room to these poor men; I have several rooms that I don't use."

But he answered, "They would much prefer the one that was designed for them; they will find it more comfortable and warmer"; and he added that it would be safer for me to keep them as far as possible from my own apartments, and not even allow them to enter the courtyard of the house. These precautions appeared to me at first excessive, for I felt full of compassion for these primitive men, who certainly had not excited my admiration at the review of the Shah, where I first saw them, and where they cut such a sorry figure, in spite of the new uniforms which had been lent to them by their chief for the occasion only—about half a day. However, when they came I was quite of the Mirza's opinion. It is almost impossible to express the mean appearance of these poor creatures. They were small, ugly, and dirty in their once brown uniforms, now all frayed and in holes, made of a stuff of the same family as sack-cloth. The collars and facings were red; the buttons gilt, with a worn-out Lion and Sun—called in Persian *Shir-o-Khourshid*. On their heads they wore felt kolahs, the colour of mud, ornamented in front with a huge brass

Lion and Sun. The bulk of their heads were shaved, leaving two long locks behind the ears. They had belts of black leather, with long daggers hanging from them right in front where the buckle should be. Their rifles were slung on their right shoulders, and their boots were *giveh*—sandals of white linen. The ages of these four soldiers varied from twenty to fifty—one could not imagine anything less martial; but these men, with such a feeble and emaciated appearance, were charged to protect my person and my goods against dangers which were, happily, problematical.

They brought with them, as their equipment, quilted coverlets and *gillims*, a sort of felt carpets, for their beds. For their cookery they had earthenware pipkins, the samovars for their tea, and a few bowls and plates.

I understood at once the object that there was in keeping them as far as possible from my apartments. They appeared quite satisfied with the physical comforts of their room, and went of their own accord to install themselves. I will say to their credit, that, apart from the disagreeable smell which exhaled from their dwelling, and which obliged me to hurry when I passed under the gateway, I had seldom to complain of them. It is just to add that I never had any occasion to praise them, for they rendered not the slightest service, had no picturesqueness, no colour, except that of dirt, and even the monotonous, subdued droning that they chanted in the evening lacked the charm suggestive of far mysterious and savage countries which one would have had a right

to expect. They belonged to a Turkish tribe of the mountains of Azerbaijan, and could speak only their own dialect. Not a single word of Persian had been able to lodge in their memories in the many years they had been quartered in Teheran; anything nearer brutes could not be imagined. They had probably some job in town to increase their income, but there were always one or two at home to keep an eye on the pot and present arms with much noise every time that I crossed the threshold.

I never succeeded in penetrating the secret of their life, though it was so close to mine; perhaps it had no secret at all. Their cooking, anyhow, had some, and I never tried to find it out. Whilst passing I made out in the obscurity in the middle of the room a little pipkin upon a fire of dry dung, which emitted an acrid and disagreeable smoke. This was under the vacant gaze of a Karaoul, sitting cross-legged and smoking his chibouk. To the marmite succeeded the samovar—for, like everybody in Persia, the Karaoul drinks a quantity of tea. They had to find themselves in food.

And this is all I know about these beings, made in God's image, who kept watch on my life. I tried vainly to take the interest in them that I should have taken in watch-dogs.

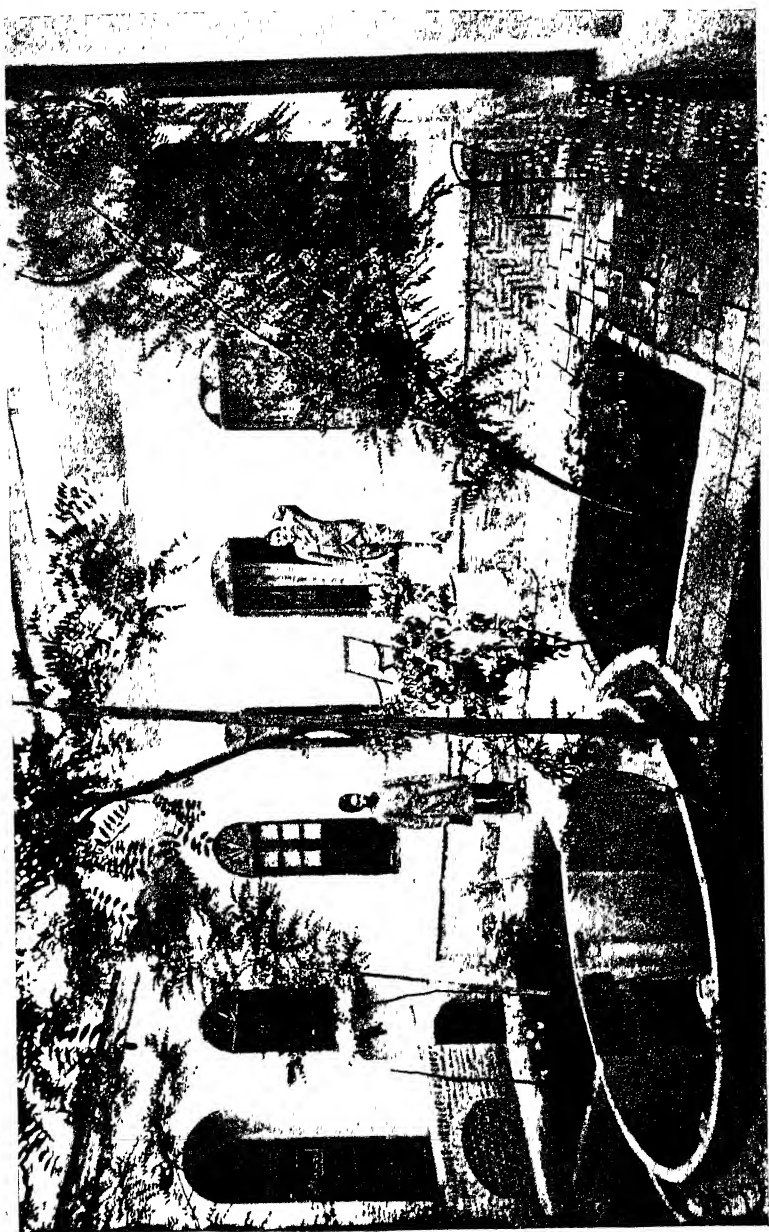
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Karaouls also perform the functions of police in the streets. At every important point of the city there are Karaoul-Khaneh, a kind of watch-houses, like police-

stations, full of them. During the night they interrogate the passers-by as to what they are doing and where they are going, and in certain parts of the town a password is required after the sunset. Europeans are exempt from these vexations; they enjoy every liberty, and if the Karaouls see them alone in the streets at night, they escort them to their houses, without asking if they require it, in the hope of getting a tip.

On a beautiful night of spring, when I was coming back alone on foot from a ball, wishing to get a little fresh air and some exercise, I heard behind me rapid footsteps. Rather afraid of being pursued by one of the many madmen who are allowed to go free in all the lands of Islam, I quickly crossed the avenue and walked near the wall. The shadow changed its direction, and fled towards me; and I saw, shining upon the darkness, the blade of a curved scimitar. I immediately took guard with my stick, and was prepared to sell my life dearly, when I was struck by the immobility of the shadow with the scimitar. I was more convinced than ever that it was a madman, and grew very nervous. I did not know what to do, when I heard the shadow speak the Turkish dialect, with hoarse, but polite intonations, and I realised that it was only a Karaoul. I continued my walk home. The shadow escorted me with a drawn scimitar to my door, but did not get any tip, for he had killed all the poetical charm of my walk through that exquisitely constellated night of spring.

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M Eustache de Lorey in the courtyard of his house in Teheran

CHAPTER IV

THE QUESTION OF SERVANTS

WHEN I set about providing myself with a servant, I had one procured for me by an attaché to the Turkish Embassy. As I had acquired a smattering of Arabic during my stay in Tunis and Egypt, he recommended me a Turkish subject knowing that language, who had just arrived in Teheran.

He was a Syrian, named Omar, who had gone to Egypt as a camel-driver's boy, and then been employed in Cairo to sweep the floor of a dancing den, where he was noticed by a person of a religious character, who engaged him to go as his servant to Mecca. After having endured many fatigues and privations and much ill-treatment, he got to the Holy City with the caravan that brought from Cairo the *Mahmal*, a sacred carpet sent annually from Egypt to cover the Kaaba. There his master refused to give him any wages, so he had to help himself by stealing little trifles belonging to him, after which he fled to Jeddah. As he feared that he would be caught by the Turkish police, he thought it would be safer to engage himself as a stoker on a ship that was

leaving for India and the Persian Gulf. This took him to Bushire.

Allah knows how he managed to get to Teheran without starving. As the name of Omar is hated in Persia, he took that of Ali—it was natural for Ali to follow Omar, as Ali was the successor of Omar in the Caliphate—and in order to avoid the contempt of the Shi'ite, he concealed his Sunnite religious feelings, and even cursed Omar now and then to avert suspicion.

In Teheran, while passing the entrance to an imposing house in the avenue of the Legations, he exercised his knowledge of spelling in reading the Arabic inscription at the top of the arch, and found out that this was the seat of the *Safir*—the Ambassador of the Commander of the Faithful, his own sovereign. A feeling, if not of patriotism, of pride at belonging to the country so grandly represented, recalled to his mind that he was a Turk. So he crossed the gateway, resumed his name of Omar and his Sunnite connections, and asked for protection. The shabbiness of his garments caused him to be refused admission. But he remained at the gate until one of the attendants of the Chancellery condescended to listen to what he had to say. It happened that just at this moment I had been asking if I could find a servant who could speak Arabic.

He was a curious servant, but full of willingness, and took my corrections so pleasantly that I could not be angry with him.

After a few weeks he told me he had to go back

to his country, and that his Embassy was going to give him the money to pay his expenses. The only thing I could do was to ask him to find me a successor, which he effected by bringing me one of his Persian friends.

He did not tell me that the applicant had never been a servant before, but only a tailor's apprentice.

He then left me and went to Resht. Some time afterwards I heard that he had assumed there the rank and the uniform of a colonel. I never could find out what decided him to strike out in this line. But thanks to it, he succeeded in marrying a widow with some money; and I daresay that he is now quite a personage in that city by the Caspian.

His successor, Hassan the tailor, arrived just when I was getting into my house, but it was not long before I discovered that he was no good as a servant. He could only strike respectful attitudes and sew on buttons. Whenever there was anything very material to be done, he burst into poetry.

This imposed such limitations on his services—as the most neglected wardrobe can only require a certain number of buttons to be sewn on—that I had to deprive myself of his unique services. When I broke the news to him he appeared quite indignant, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, “But what will become of me now that I have been eating your salt for such a long time, and am driven out into the streets? What am I to do? Where am I to go?”

When I reminded him that he had only been a

fortnight with me, he answered, "I feel as if I had been with you for years."

"But," I said, "you are no good."

"How can I be no good after having stayed with you? Can you forget what Sa'di said?—'A piece of clay having fallen in the *Hammam* from my beloved's hand into mine, I said to it, "Art thou musk or ambergris that I am drunk with thy perfume, which catches at the heart?"—It answered, "I was but a worthless piece of clay, but I was in the company of the rose for a moment. This companionship transformed me, or else I should still be the same piece of clay that I was."'"

After such an argument, I could not do less than keep him for a week more—a week in which I discovered that if he was a poet, he was also a thief.

I missed my silver cigarette case, and I was almost certain he had stolen it. I called for him and told him, looking him straight in the eyes, that the silver cigarette case, which was on such and such a shelf, had fallen behind the book-case. "You will find it before to-night . . . or I shall have to ask the police to come and look for it." And, to my relief, it was on the shelf when I returned.

But that had awakened my suspicions. When he was out, I went to visit the servants' quarters, and I noticed near the petroleum keg a bottle full of liquid. I easily guessed that that bottle went home with him every night to fill the lamps of his family; so I emptied it into the keg and filled it with water, without saying a word.

When he went away that night, I visited his room to make sure that the bottle had gone with him, and two days afterwards I asked him how the lamps had been burning in his house. He began by being astonished, then blushed, then laughed, saying, "The *Sahib* is very clever."

After I had got rid of him, I asked the head servant of the Legation to find me a good servant, and he said he had a nephew who was just leaving his situation. I took him instantly. His name was Abd-Oullah; he belonged to a sect called Ali-Oullahi, a Mohammedan sect, who have mysteries in which fire plays an important part. Their high priest is said to conjure with it and to seat himself on it.

At the same time I engaged as a valet Mehmed, who had been serving in a European household. Contrary to the custom, he had a written character, which was most satisfactory, which proved to be nearly true, as Mehmed was as good a servant as Persia can produce, and he remained with me till I left the country. When he bought things for me, he only took a reasonable percentage for himself, perhaps 25 per cent., never more than 50 per cent., which is considered honest in a country where servants are accustomed to making it 100 per cent. before it is considered dishonest. For there is a code of honour which limits depredations, and a man who exceeds that limit would be considered a thief even by his own countrymen.

The youth of Mehmed had been severely tested with hardships; he had the spirit of adventure which

distinguishes his countrymen, who do not hesitate to try anything to succeed in life. A Persian will leave his native place and travel great distances, but he hardly ever goes beyond the borders of the sacred soil of Persia, though he often goes to places of which he knows nothing except what he has heard in exaggerated descriptions. He will lend his services as servant to be taken in the suite of someone going there, or will follow a caravan, and thus make the journey without spending any money. Usually, when he has arrived at the place of his dreams, the inevitable disappointment succeeds. Being a stranger, he is ill received, and robbed in the caravanserai where he has put up. Realising his position, he then thinks of finding some fellow-townsmen, and makes inquiries as to what quarter or caravanserai they patronise—for everyone of the same town flocks together. And then, after a fine show of friendship and effusive greetings, they set to work to rob him of whatever he has left. They have, however, the grace to feed him, because they could not allow their fellow-townsmen to die of hunger. This he repays by rendering them little services.

If he is intelligent, agreeable, and witty, he will readily be taken as a hanger-on without wages, and his patron will keep him, feed him, and give him his old clothes. After this first step into society, he usually finds various other situations, now climbing, now descending in the social scale.

But if everything goes wrong, he at length thinks of going back to his native place. If he has neither money nor friends, it will be still more difficult to find a traveller or a caravan to accompany; and this was the fate of Mehmed, who, having been told marvels about Meshed, went there and did not succeed. To work his return to Teheran, he could only find a very poor *Charvadar*, who authorised him to sit on his *tarentass* (cart) on the condition of helping him to take care of his horses, but would not find him in food. Mehmed had then more than once to eat clay in the course of his journey to fill his stomach and appease his hunger; and if he went to sleep during the journey, the *Charvadar* woke him brutally, on the pretext that he was heavier when he slept.

Compared to this, the wage I gave him must have seemed princely, for I always paid my servants far too much in my ignorance, as I gave them ten tomans a month (two pounds), whilst the ordinary servants of the French Legation only received three or four tomans, and the natives, of course, paid them less.

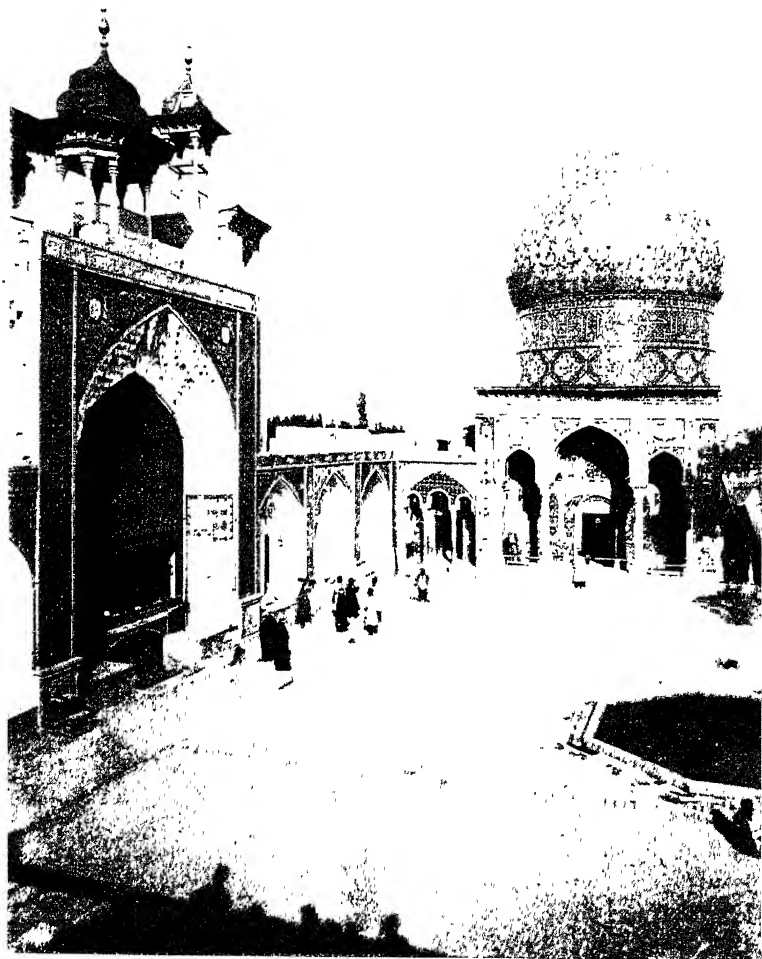
On that they had to feed themselves. Their meals were very simple, and consisted chiefly of bread and cheese, varied now and then with *pilaw*. They drank water and tea. The Persian will take tea all day long; it does not cost him much more than a farthing a cup.

They slept in the house in a room without furniture; their beds consisted of a piece of felt with a quilt on the top, which they brought with them.

Abd-Oullah and Mehmed hated each other, and, as I remembered the axiom of Augustus—divide in order to govern—I did not do anything to bring them together. I had soon to congratulate myself on that policy; it may have saved my life.

One day, for example, when I was lunching out, word was brought to me that my servant Mehmed was waiting at the door with a very important message for me. Quite astonished, I went out, and he told me that his colleague Abd-Oullah had brought a girl into my house, which was consequently surrounded by a raging mob.

I felt frightened, for I remembered all I had been told about Europeans being threatened with death for affairs with Mussulman women. My first idea was to go and ask the advice of the native secretary of our Legation as to the best way to get out of the situation. I found him at his house, and when I had explained the situation to him, I saw from his perplexity that it was a dangerous and important situation. The first thing he told me was not to enter my house on any pretext before I was sure that the woman had left. He came with me, and as we approached, we noticed the crowd filling the street, gesticulating furiously. But my presence in the street astonished them. They, of course, thought that I was within. I sent Mehmed into the house to order Abd-Oullah to come out and bring the woman. Abd-Oullah came out, and, Persian-like, said, "But there is nobody here. You can come up and see."



A Persian Mosque.

But when he saw the crowd, he understood that his lie was useless, and he began to tremble and beg my pardon. I said, "Bring out the woman." While he was fetching her, the native secretary explained to me that we must protect that woman, for, after all, she had done me no wrong, and if she were left to the mercies of the mob, she would be beaten, and Allah knows what.

I acquiesced, and when the shrinking phantom made its appearance, the native secretary went up to her furiously, and said, "I am going to take you to the police." His rage was simulated to satisfy the mob; but as soon as he had dragged her away, he let her go, and she fled away, thanking him.

The reason why the mob was so furious is because Christians are impure—and the foulest Mussulman courtesan is so defiled by the touch of the best Christian, that she must die unless the man turns Mussulman on the spot.

To show the intensity of feeling on the subject, I may quote the instance of a Frenchman who had started a manufactory of carpets in Kurdistan. In that part of Persia morals are not so strict. He fell in love with a beautiful young carpet-weaver. Marriage being impossible between Christians and Mohammedans, she became his mistress, and no objection was raised in the country. But, being called by his business to Teheran for a long time, as he did not want to be parted from her, and as, at the same time, he was well

aware of the fanaticism of the capital upon this point, he conceived the idea of dressing her as a boy, and she was taken for his servant by people. All went well until her figure began to betray her, and a servant who had a grudge against his master happened to notice it. He went straight to a Mollah to tell him the scandal: this Mollah jumped at the chance of distinguishing himself, spread the news that an infidel had outraged the sacred law of Islam by casting his eyes upon a Mussulman woman, and that the guilty pair must die.

A crowd rapidly surrounded him, and he marched at their head to the house of the accused. The crowd thundered at the gate. But in Persia gates are strong, and there are no windows giving on the street; so, before they could batter their way in, the two culprits had had time to make their way up to their roof, and fly along from roof to roof until they arrived at the house of the Moujtehid, the chief priest of Teheran, who explained to him that the only way to save the life of the girl and himself was to turn Mussulman; that in this case he would protect him, but that in the other case he would be the first to draw the dagger. In the face of such an argument, there was nothing else to be done, brave as the Frenchman was.

To his credit be it said that he remained a Mussulman. They had several children, now in good positions in Teheran, one of them being married to a princess of the Imperial house.

CHAPTER V

HORSES AND SPORT

RIDING is not only a sport in Persia, but a necessity ; and as I am very fond of horses, I lost no time about stocking my stables. I bought a Karabagh horse, very like an English hunter ; it had the beautiful arched neck and sweeping tail which the Persians esteem so highly. It was about the size of a polo pony, and was quite as clever. I also bought a horse for Abd-Oullah. This horse was, of course, of a stronger build, not so well bred. Ordinary horses are very cheap in Persia, but a choice animal with a good pedigree fetches a high figure. I do not say "pedigree." All horses there have pedigrees—a copy of it is attached to the plaits of its mane when the animal is sold.

My stable (*tavileh*) was a huge room with holes in the wall in the shape of a "V" to act as mangers. The horses were tethered by the hind leg to a ring in the floor by a hobble made of goat's hair. They were not fed in the same way as they are in Europe : no oats were given to them ; they had barley instead, which was mixed with chaff, called in Persian *kah*, cut in lengths of about two inches. It was given to them

twice a day, about two pounds in the morning and three in the evening. Nor did they have any hay, but as much of this *kah* as they could consume.

Every year for one month in spring they were given green fodder. This is called *sabzi*, and is either clover or young barley cut and at first mixed with *kah*, the quantity of which was diminished gradually till it was entirely eliminated. The same thing happened with the barley, which little by little was also omitted.

The horses were very fond of that diet. To cut this *sabzi* the grooms used a sickle, a very primitive tool, whose handle they put between their knees after seating themselves in the Persian way. They cut it three or four inches long.

Abd-Oullah asserted that eating this green fodder made the horses' teeth blunt. This is why, when the end of the diet came, he introduced into the *sabzi* a little wet *kah* and barley that he had steeped in water some hours before to make it soft, in order that the teeth of the horse might not be tried. All Persians do this, so there must be some reason for it.

Then the diet began again in the other direction, till he gave no more *sabzi*.

In certain parts of the country where grapes are abundant, the diet of *sabzi* is varied with a diet of raisins. The result of these diets, whether it benefits the health or not, is to make the horses grow fat.

During that time they have to be indulged, and worked very little; Abd-Oullah only allowed me very

short rides at a walking pace. That complicated our spring picnics a good deal. We were obliged to go to the gardens nearest the town, for all the horses of the city were under the treatment at the same time.

There is no straw litter for horses in Persia; it is made of dung previously dried in the sun. This makes a very soft, if not very fragrant, bed. Every day it is taken out and put back in the evening, arranged like a parterre round the horse.

With Persian servants your horses have to take their meals in your presence; otherwise the servants sell the barley. At first, after I had seen the barley given to the horses, I used to go away, but as I noticed that the horses were growing weak and stumbled, my suspicions were awakened. So once I made a pretence at departure and came back a few minutes after the barley had been given: the horse was just picking up the last grains, but the confusion of Abd-Oullah when I looked straight at him showed me that something wrong was going on, and I examined the premises. At length I espied in a dark corner a little sack containing the barley of which he had robbed the horse the moment he had departed; it was going to be sold. In Persia this offence is too ordinary to be considered a reason for dismissal.

The horses are very much wrapped up in Persia.

The horse is first enveloped in the *pirhan*, a coat of wool, which covers it completely. It is crossed on the chest. On the top of it is put the *joul*, a covering of the

same shape as the *pirhan* but of a harder stuff, and often lined with felt. Then the horse is covered with a *named* of felt, bigger than the other coverings, which it hides completely. It is long enough to cover the neck and the head, but is only used for this when the horse sleeps out of doors—as all horses do in the summer; at other times the *named* is turned over on the back of the horse. The *named* is three-quarters of an inch thick; it is of a dark khaki colour and made of the same felt that is used for carpets in the tents of the nomads, and for the head-gear of peasants, which is called *kolah namedy*.

In Persia horses are ridden very young. An *Asp-i-noh-zin* horse new to the saddle is barely two years old. In consequence they age quickly. When their teeth are in a bad state they are fed with *navalla*, made of barley flour and water rolled into balls. These *navalla* are also used in the journeys across desert, barley flour being less bulky than the barley itself, and the food being more digestive and nourishing. It is also the ordinary food of camels.

The Shah has in all the principal provinces of Persia important stud stables, at which the best breeds of horses are raised. There is also one in Teheran which is under the administration of the *Mirakhor* (Lord of the Manger)—a sort of Master of the Horse.

The Shah often makes a present of a horse. He gives a written order on the *Mirakhor*, in which the value of the horse presented is indicated. But the *Mirakhor* generally takes no notice of that, and sends a horse of

no value ; and you have to make a handsome present of money to the man who brings it. These presents of the Shah are often burdens rather than advantages for the people who are not powerful enough to awe the *Mirakhor*.

As might have been expected, races are a notable institution in Persia. The Shah himself takes a great interest in them, and has many horses trained for them every year.

To train horses for racing, Persians keep them from sleeping ; they load them with blankets and *nameds* to sweat them, and they are ridden by little boys who never let them stop still, but walk them about all day long. This régime makes them thin very rapidly.

The races are a Court function. The Shah and all the court are always present, and so are the Diplomatic body and the other most influential foreigners.

The meeting takes place at the back of the castle of Dowshantepeh. Marquees are erected lined with handsome velvets and silks. That of the Shah himself is red outside. It is erected on the top of a little natural rise of stones.

His Majesty sits in an arm-chair with a telescope, like an admiral's, whilst all his court is standing behind, except the Grand Vizier, who stands by his side. They have to stand thus for several hours.

The horses, instead of running short distances as they do in Europe, run sometimes ten or fifteen miles, which makes the race very dull and as difficult to follow as a yacht race. This is why dancers and musicians

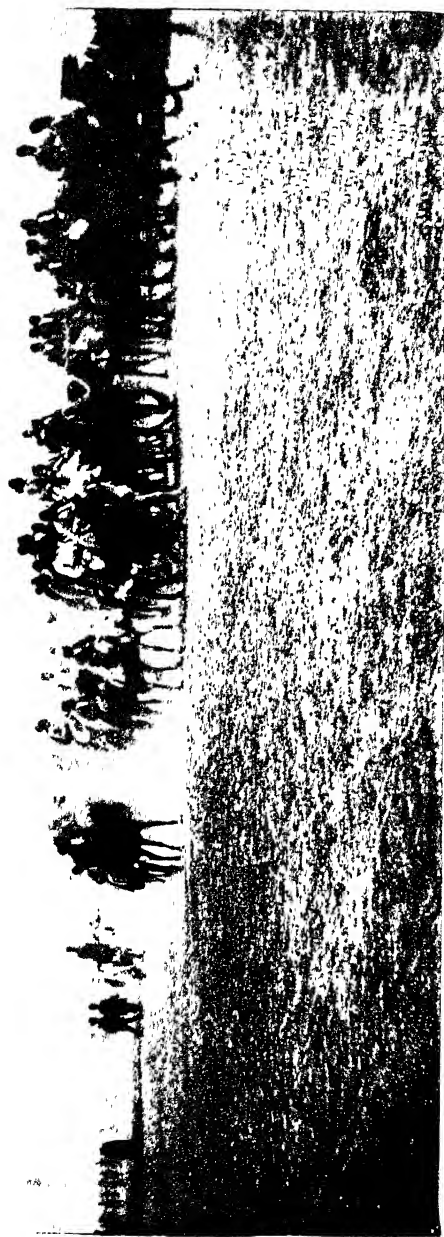
are performing in front of the Shah during the race. As soon as the horses have passed the Royal tent in each lap, the dancers begin again, though occasionally the Shadow of God takes a squint through his telescope at the progress of the race.

When the horses are coming round at the last lap, everyone gets frantically excited, though it is always a horse belonging to the Shah which wins. Men with sticks are waiting near the winning post to stop any other horse which threatens the legitimate result.

If by any chance they fail to stop it, the unfortunate owner is obliged by etiquette to present the horse to His Majesty, in order that the winner may belong to the Shah in the orthodox way. When the winning horse nears the Shah's tent, he turns and climbs the platform into the Royal presence.

One wonders how they manage the betting. After the meeting is concluded, there is a highly picturesque procession of horsemen and camel-riders back to the town. There is a general rush, like we have at the end of our races; but in Persia the crowds are lost in such clouds of dust as could hardly be seen elsewhere.

Good horsemanship is common in Persia. Not only does the national disposition of the Persian contribute to this, but also the way in which the babies are carried pick-a-back by their mothers. This strengthens the muscles of their legs and gives them a fine grip. Even among the lower classes it is more than rare to find a bad horseman, and *a priori* among the upper classes.



March past at the races of Dowshan-Tepoh.

This is why they cannot understand a foreigner of position who is sent by his sovereign to represent him—or, to take the Persian's point of view, sent as a "hostage to the Shah"—not being able to ride.

Once the secretary of a Legation, who was a bad horseman, was riding; when trying a timid gallop on a stony road, his horse, which he was not keeping well in hand, stumbled on a loose stone and sent him flying over his head on to the ground.

A crowd gathered round him, jeering. His Persian servant, who was riding behind him, dismounted, and, full of confusion—for his master's humiliation was reflected on him—helped him to get up, and addressed a few words to his fellow-countrymen.

When they had resumed their ride, this time at a slow trot, the servant said to his master, "Don't be afraid, sir. I have arranged everything so that no shame may fall upon your head. I said to the Persians who saw you fall that you were a splendid horseman, like all your countrymen, but that you were drunk to-day."

The horse enters into the life of the Persians as much as the Arabs. Many of their stories prove this. Abd-Oullah had a favourite story about the sheik of a tribe of Arabistan, a province of Southern Persia, who had a very remarkable breed of horses. His most beautiful mare disappeared one day, he could not find out how, and he was inconsolable.

His daughter, a rare beauty, with eyes like a gazelle, was loved by a young man of a neighbouring tribe.

Beauties, even among the nomad tribes, are never allowed to be seen, but the fame of their charms is bruited abroad by the women, and men fall in love with the idea. In this instance the young man was more fortunate: he found the means to make advances to her, which were well received. But the father would not consent to the marriage. They therefore plotted together, and the young man carried her off on his saddle-bow. But they were discovered and pursued by the sheik and his men, who could not overtake the fugitives, whose mount was exceedingly swift, and who were soon out of sight.

After a long search, the sheik learned that this wonderful animal was the mare that had been stolen from him for the purpose of the elopement. Then he was quite pleased, for he could never have survived the shame of his favourite being beaten even by another of his own horses. So he sent envoys to the young man and made peace with him, and asked as the price of his paternal blessing the return of the mare, to whom he attached far more value than to his daughter.

The new Shah, like all his ancestors, is devoted to hunting and shooting. He showed this when he was governor at Tabriz, where he had excellent shooting, even bears.

Now he will have the advantage of the magnificent shooting grounds where his grandfather spent so much of his time.

Amongst the best places for shooting in Persia is

Jaje Roud, on the road to Meshed-i-sar, in the foothills of the Elbruz mountains, three hours from Teheran. It is a hunting box. The house is situated on the right bank of the river Jaje (Roud means river), on an eminence, and is surrounded by outbuildings for the suite. The whole countryside is strictly preserved; only the Shah and his guests ever hunt or shoot in this demesne. There only can be found a species of game that none but His Majesty is permitted to shoot. This sacred game is the francolin, a bird introduced from Arabia. It is so difficult to acclimatise there, that the Shah himself often forbears to shoot it.

The principal game at Jaje Roud are the bouquetin and moufflon. Both are very shy and difficult to approach. Beaters are sent in all directions, and often several days pass before a herd of them is sighted.

While waiting, His Majesty shoots commoner game, such as wild boars, or hares, but without much interest, as they are so numerous; their meat being impure and prohibited by the Koran, they are left where they are killed, like rabbits in Australia.

For the moufflon the Shah and his suite post themselves behind the rocks on an eminence on the side away from the wind commanding a gorge. The beaters, who are on horseback, have to drive the game very cautiously in order not to frighten them too much, for the moufflon are extraordinarily active, and might break back if desperate. When the moufflon come within

range the Shah shoots first; then, a few seconds after, everybody else fires at the same time, . . . and the moufflon go away.

Foxes are also to be found in these districts, and a few panthers and leopards. The Shah hunts the latter like foxes and with great intrepidity. When in the chase a panther takes refuge in a cave, a courtier, eager to win the Shah's favour, dashes in at the risk of his life to drive it out. When a panther, or even a moufflon, is killed, the Shah always has his photograph taken beside it.

In the plains round Teheran the Shah goes out hawking. It is a very picturesque sight, reminding one of the Middle Ages in Europe, when Frederic of Hohenstaufen, "the Wonder of the World," rode out with his falconers in the Conca d'Oro of Sicily.

There are several sorts of falcons: the very large ones for coursing gazelles—these are almost eagles; the middle-sized falcons are used for coursing herons, cranes, and hares; another kind, a little smaller, are used for partridges; and there are small ones used for quail. These last have a unique feature—in order to make them swoop straighter, their own tails are taken out and replaced by longer feathers taken from the tail of a wild hawk, bluish in colour, which gives them a most extraordinary appearance.

The game coursed with falcons in the plains round Teheran are chiefly a red-plumaged partridge and little

grey ones called by the curious name of *tihou*, from their cry, like the English peewit.

Greyhounds are used for coursing of another kind.

The aristocratic and wealthy Persian is a great sportsman.

CHAPTER VI

THE STREETS OF TEHERAN

TEHERAN does not offer as much interest as many other Persian towns, because it is virtually a new town. There is not an ancient monument in the whole city. In spite of having been given the rank of city by Shah Tahmasp, the second of the Sefavi dynasty, it has only really been a city since Agha-Mohammed, founder of the present Kajar dynasty, established his residence in Teheran in 1795. Since it is not far from the mountains of Khorassan, and upon the road to his native country, Asterabad, which he could easily reach in case of danger, this town offered the best guarantees for his safety.

Six sovereigns have reigned there: Agha-Mohammed (1795-1797); Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834); Mohammed Shah (1834-48); Nasr-ed-din Shah (1848-96); Muzaffer-ed-din (1896-1907); and Mohammed Ali Shah, the present sovereign. All of his predecessors have contributed to its embellishment, but it is, above all, Nasr-ed-din who must be considered the Haussmann of Teheran. He constructed numerous edifices, and, without damaging its picturesque old quarter, built a

quarter in the European fashion, with large avenues planted with trees. The trees of the avenues have quite a character of their own, because, instead of being planted regularly like ours, they are dotted about, with their roots running down to a conduit of rapidly flowing water. The effect is charming, for the variety of species gives an impromptu effect to the curtain of verdure which conceals, very happily, the mud walls without windows that form the background of every Persian street.

Teheran, however, earned the title of capital during the Afghan invasion and under the reign of the later Sefavi kings. But that was of such short duration, and during such a troublous period, that nothing of any importance remains of the Sefavi city.

Going farther back, one finds it mentioned in the seventeenth century by Pietro della Valle (1618), an Italian traveller, who calls it the City of the Planes, because of the quantity of these trees, whose tops rise above every part of the town. He says there is no edifice or any other object worthy of remark. It is also mentioned by Sir Thomas Herbert (1627).

Mirza Ali Akbar, of whom I asked some particulars about the history of Teheran, made me translate the following passage from an old Persian chronicler, who speaks in this way of the inhabitants of Teheran: "They dwell in subterranean houses like caves. When the enemy invades the country, they conceal themselves in these places of refuge, from which it is impossible to

expel them, even if they are blockaded for several consecutive days. As soon as the invaders have departed, they come out of their hiding-places, and begin to pillage and assassinate on the roads. They are constantly in a state of insurrection and revolt against their sovereign.

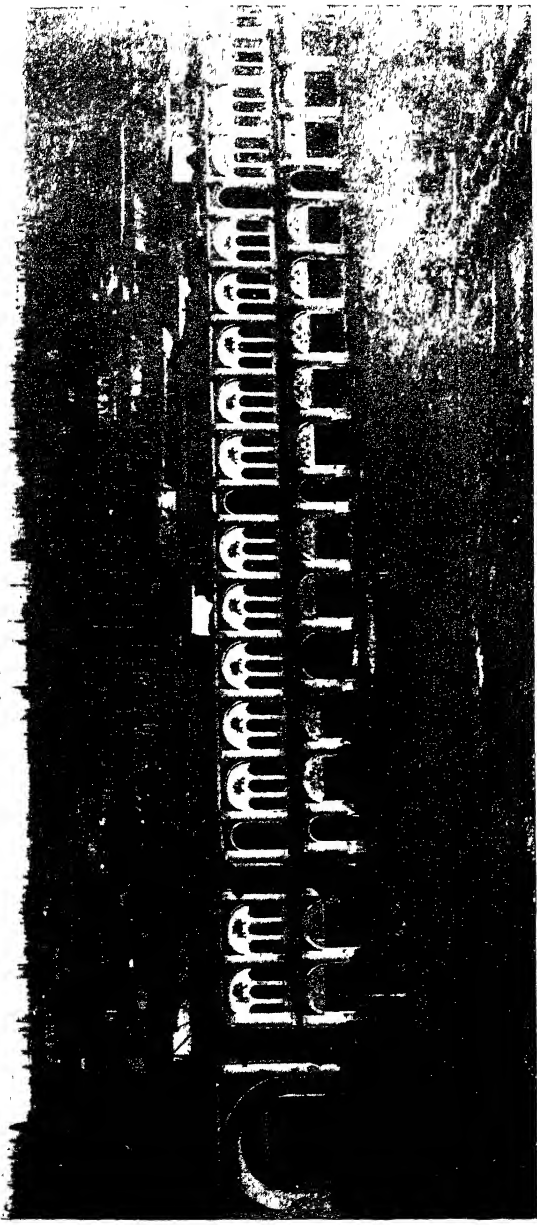
“There are in this district twelve hamlets always at war one with the other. When they seem ready to obey the Sultan, the governor assembles the chiefs of the district to ask them to pay the tribute. If they consent, one brings a cock, the other a hen, and they say, there is the value of a dinar. And that is the only way in which they pay tribute.

“They labour in the fields with a mattock or hoe, instead of oxen, because they fear that the tax collector would take these animals away. It is for the same reason that they never use any beasts of burden. Their country is very fertile, especially in fruits, which are of such beauty that their equal is never to be found in other countries.”

The savageness of the Teheranese has disappeared in the course of time, and the fruits have lost some of their reputation. They are, however, still excellent, but must yield the palm to those of Ispahan.

The principal avenue of modern Teheran is the Khiaban-Ala-ed-Dowleh, called by the Europeans Rue des Legations, which begins at the English Legation and ends at the Meidan-i-Toup-Khaneh.

This place is not so imposing as it appears in the



Maidan-i-Toup-Khaneh The Piccadilly Circus of Teheran.

illustration. It is a sort of junction for all the principal streets of the new quarter. It takes its name from the row of guns which surrounds a square basin, and from the presence, in one corner of it, of the arsenal (*Toup-Khaneh* in Persian). It is surrounded by buildings like the colonnades of an Italian piazza. The arcades are in two storeys, the lower closed by doors like coach-houses, the upper filled with windows of three lights, contained in arches, each of which has its upper part filled in and painted white in order to throw up the Persian Lion and Sun, in yellow. Each column is painted a different colour, without the slightest attempt to harmonise them. These enormous buildings, used as barracks, are almost as flimsy in their materials as the pasteboard palaces of an exhibition. The Minister of Public Buildings wanted to make with them an impression of vast expenditure on the Shah to cover his speculations.

At the west end the architecture of the beautiful building of the Bank of Persia, covered with coloured tiles, redeems the effect of the square. This building is one of the most charming in Teheran, with its arcaded balconies and fantastic gables

It is on the Meidan-Toup-Khaneh that "civilisation" has stamped itself most strongly of anywhere in Teheran. Here is the centre for tramways and cabs; here are the Imperial bank and the telegraph office connected with the two European systems. The tramways have taken very well in Teheran. The company was started by

Belgians, who bought the concession from a Frenchman, M. Boital.

The cabs are a most promiscuous assemblage, broken-down caleches brought from Russia, which the Persians call *caleskeh*. They cost two *krans* the course—about tenpence—if it does not take more than an hour. By the hour costs in proportion. The *caleskeji*, or coachmen, are dressed like Cossacks—probably because they are generally men of the Caucasus.

There are six gates to the Meidan-i-Toup-Khaneh: one for the Rue des Legations, at the north-east; one at the north-west, leading to Khiaban-i-Lalezar, the Street of the Tulips; one at the east, opening on to the Meidan Maksh, or Place d'Armes; one at the south, opening into the Khiaban-Almasieh (the Street of the Diamonds); one at the south-west, opening into the Khiaban Nasserieh; and one at the west, opening into the Khiaban Shimran, which the Europeans called Rue du Gaz because the gasworks are in it.

The Meidan-i-Maksh is a huge square surrounded by walls lined with arches all round the inner face; the arches have no apparent use but decoration, but they really act in place of buttresses; without them the wall, being built of mud, would collapse.

In the centre of each side is a building that looks like a polo pavilion—and, as a matter of fact, polo is played in this square by the English residents. But the resemblance is only accidental. The balconies are for watching the evolutions of the military, which take

place here. Every morning the soldiers come at eight o'clock, some from the barracks, but the majority of them from their own dwellings. For, as they are paid very irregularly, if paid at all, they have to earn their living in civilian employments. They are largely butcher boys, a fact which perhaps gives them the most valuable part of their training.

Many also are money-changers.

These soldiers keep their uniforms in their places of business, and wear a sort of dagger in front. As the uniforms have a habit of coming to pieces, they wear ordinary clothes, generally of the most unmartial appearance, under or over them, as may be most convenient.

Their drill is under the exalted supervision of a few European officers. One of them is an Austrian, Baron Wagner von Wetterstead, whose huge stiff mustachios, rivalling those of Nadir Shah, make a great impression on the men. Another is General Maletta, an Italian who has been in the Egyptian army. The uniform these officers wear is Austrian.

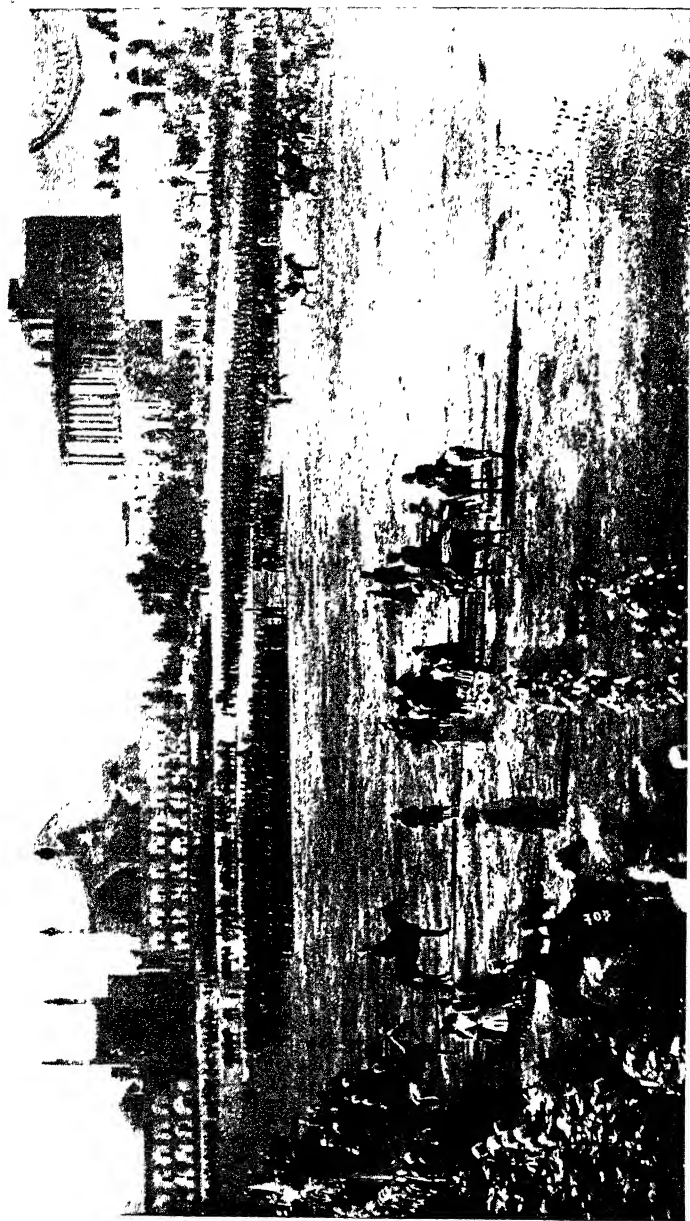
They make the very most of their materials, and drill the soldiers in the European way. But, as might be expected, they have many difficulties to contend with. Still, things are much better than they used to be, thanks to their ability and earnestness. Some of their predecessors were not so conscientious. One of them, who had come to Teheran without having made up his mind as to what employment he should

demand of the Shah, was a man of superb physique, a great athlete. The Shah saw that he must be a redoubtable fighter, and, with the Persian idea of the commander of an army, at once made him a general solely on the strength of his physique. He was thankful for his good fortune, and, wishing to show his conscientiousness, arrived every morning dressed in a gorgeous uniform at the Meidan Maksh, drew his sword with a magnificent sweep, and held it high in the air. This was the sign for the bugle to sound the assembly and the drill to begin, while the general ambled round the square looking at his watch. When it was ten o'clock, he drew his sword with the same grand gesture, the bugle sounded again, and everybody went home.

After several years of this severe service, the Government gave him a pension.

The character of the instruction makes very little difference to the Persian army, for the only soldiers who are worth anything are wild tribesmen, who use their own methods. No training whatever could prevent the average Persian soldier from being a coward and running away at the first hint of danger, and I have always wondered how Nadir Shah was able to conquer India with such men. There must, of course, have been large numbers of Bakhtiaris, Kurds, and Turkomans, who are dashing fighters, in his army.

There is an anecdote told of Nadir Shah's soldiers from Kashan and Ispahan. When that conqueror led



A military review on the great square of Isfahan

his victorious army back from India, he dismissed to their homes thirty thousand men belonging to these districts. They asked for an escort of a hundred more warlike soldiers before they would start. "Would to God I was a robber again," said the scornful emperor, "that I might waylay you and plunder you."

The only regiment in Teheran which counts at all, militarily speaking, is a regiment of Persian Cossacks recruited from the north-western tribes of Persia, commanded by Russian officers and wearing the same dress as the Russian Cossacks. Their chief colonel, Kosakoffsky, is very popular in Teheran. Each Legation has a certain number of men of this regiment as a bodyguard.

The Shah holds reviews in the Meidan Maksh; they consist of parades and marches and feats of horsemanship.

One of the Russian colonels of Cossacks, who is a remarkable horseman, once had the unfortunate ambition to show his ability at a review. It is a custom with the Cossacks in Russia to salute the personage for whom the review is being held by riding up at full gallop till within a few yards of him. The horse is then reined up sharply and stops dead. The colonel wished to salute the Shah in this way, and, going to the end of the Meidan, spurred his horse into a gallop. The Shah, not understanding what he meant, when he saw the horse thundering at him, with the colonel standing on his stirrups and whizzing his sword round his head,

thought an attempt was being made upon his life, and ran away. The chief of the police rushed on the officer, who hastened to explain his intentions; but the Shah never could get over a feeling of nervousness when he saw that man, who was shortly afterwards replaced by Colonel Kosakoffsky.

It is in the Meidan Maksh that executions take place. There were, as far as I know, none in the reign of Muzaffer-ed-din, except that of the murderer of his father, who was hanged on a gibbet of the football-goal pattern which is in vogue in the Orient—an exceptionally high gibbet, where the executed could be left for a week or more as an example.

The Khiaban Nasserieh leads to the bazar, passing along by the wall of the palace. On the right stands the Dar-ul-fonoun—the Gate of Knowledge—the Polytechnic School, in which young Persians are taught all sorts of sciences by native and European teachers. It is conducted on the lines of the French polytechnic schools. Everything is taught there, even music. There, very young boys, recruited for the military bands, are instructed under the high direction of a bandmaster-general, a Frenchman, Le General Lemaire, formerly assistant bandmaster in a French regiment, at about six pounds a month. He took the title of general, and wears the uniform of a French general officer.

There are a quantity of military bands in Teheran, and one of the ordinary features of these bands is that you see musicians of from twelve to over fifty-five years

old playing in them, while by no means the smallest instruments are given to the smallest boys. You see a fat man of forty playing a flute next to a dear little boy puffing out his cheeks at a trombone. The best band is that of the Cossacks.

All these bands are used in the Legations to play during dinners or at fêtes. On the arrival of the foreign Ministers, as each carriage drives up the National Anthem of its country is played in a manner that gives local colour with a vengeance.

It is in the Khiaban-i-Shimran that you find the gas-works. They were established by a Frenchman to whom the concession of the lighting of the streets had been given. A hideous building with a hugely high chimney was built, and mains were laid in the principal streets, and lamp-posts of the European type erected. But after it had been working for a few days, they found it so expensive that they did not make any more gas, but put on each lamp-post a petroleum lamp. Now the gas-works are used as a dépôt for the coal, which is brought on the back of donkeys from mines not far from Teheran.

The Khiaban-i-Almasieh is the most picturesque avenue of Teheran. It begins at a monumental gate, with its great arch set in tiles that flash like jewels, flanked by double arches not less rich and crowned by a delicate arcade filled in with sapphire sky as clear as glass, and ends at the principal gate of the Imperial Enderoun, Dervazeh Almas—the Gate of Diamonds—so called because of the looking-glasses cut in the shape

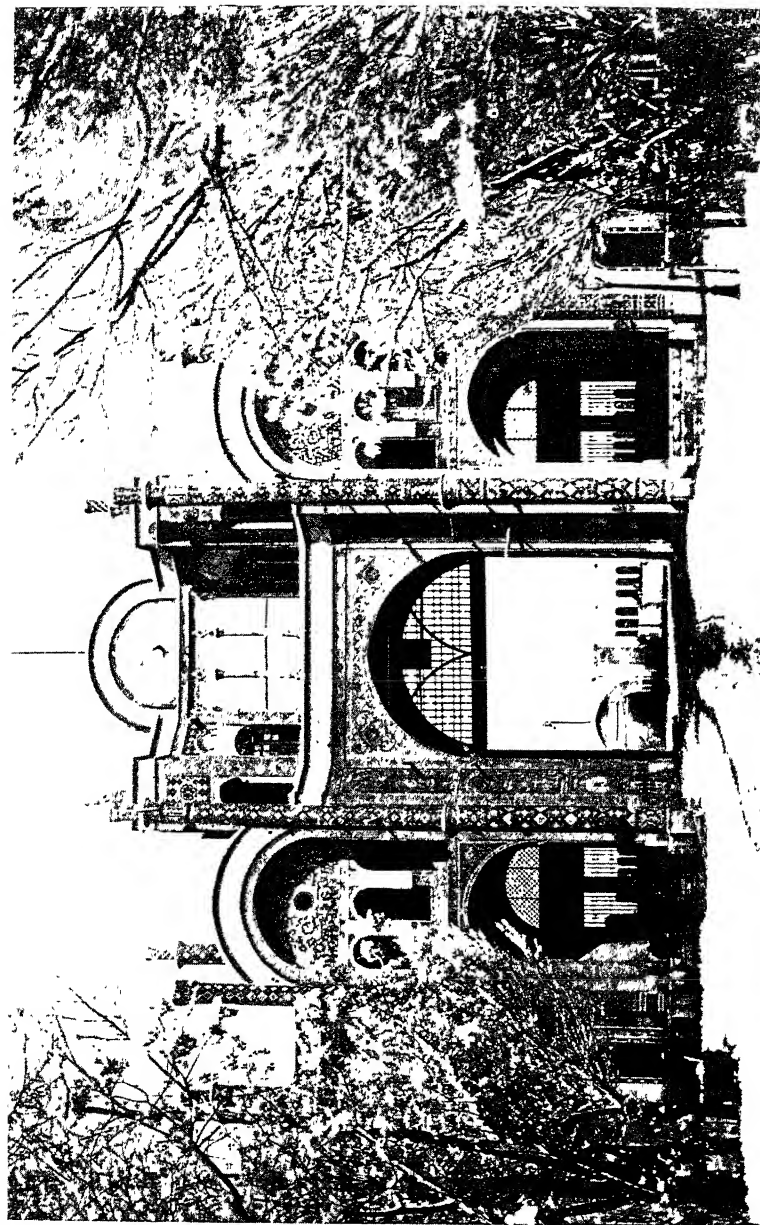
of diamonds, shining in the sun, which ornament its bright red façade.

It is in this avenue that the most beautiful trees of Teheran are found—huge trees, between which roses, apricots, and peaches let fall into the stream of clear water, which runs down it, the petals of their fragrant blossoms.

There are all sorts of things to be seen in this short avenue. There is the arsenal, whose buildings extend to the Meidan-i-Toup-Khaneh, where cannon are founded under the direction of a Frenchman, an ex-workman in the Toulon arsenal, who has been made a Persian colonel. There are shops, like those in the bazar, hidden in the foliage of the trees: in some of them cabinetmakers make their precious coffers of sandalwood, ornamented with minute mosaics encrusted with ivory, ebony, and brass or gold, called *khatem*; others are occupied by merchants of stuffs and spices; and in one of them, arranged like a doll's house, is a class of little boys, learning to intone the Koran with the proper movements of their bodies. They sway them to their chanting, under the vigilant direction of an old *Mollah* with a gigantic turban.

At the end of the avenue, on the left hand, is the residence of one who was a prime favourite of Muzaffer-ed-din Shah—his doctor, Hakim-el-Moulk, Minister of the Court and of Public Works.

Crossing the end, at right angles, is the Street of the Enderoun, which runs all along the residences of the



Dervazeh-Dowleh—a gate in Teheran in winter

Shah's wives. Turning into the right-hand portion of this street, after proceeding a few yards you turn to the left into the Street of the Naib-es-Saltaneh, and pass in front of the palace of Shoa-es-Saltaneh, the second son of Muzaffer-ed-din, in front of which is the *Otagh-i-Nizam*, the Military Chamber, or Ministry of War, an imposing building in a garden, surrounded by palings of wood, painted green, through which one can perceive the numerous generals of all ages coming to inquire what chance there is of getting their pay.

This street leads to a very picturesque square, called Meidan-i-Shah, or Meidan-Ark—a square almost entirely occupied by a huge artificial basin, at the extremity of which is, upon a platform, the Cannon of Pearls—*Toup-i-Mourvari*—taken from the Portuguese at Ormuz by Shah Abbas. This gun is a place of sanctuary (*bast*) for criminals, in the same way that some of the mosques, the Imperial stable, and the telegraph office are—anyone who wants to shelter himself from a judge or from the wrath of the king, has only to climb on that platform. There he is inviolable. His family or the passers-by feed him, and he can remain there till his pardon is granted.

This square is surrounded by gardens: to the north are the glittering buildings of the Dafterkhaneh, or Secretariate of State, which contains one of the principal gates of the palace, that at which the diplomats enter; on the top of which is the Bala-khaneh (upper rooms) from which the Shah shows himself sometimes to his people.

In front, on the south side, stands the Nagara-khaneh, a sort of arcade, on the first floor of which, at the rising and setting of the sun, is played every day the "music of a thousand years." It is the privilege of the kings of Persia, going back into the dark ages, probably to the era of the Zoroastrian kings. It is a sort of salute of the King of the earth to the King of the skies. The instruments used are *kernas* or horns of colossal dimensions, which produce hoarse sounds, very vaguely musical, accentuated by the rattle of drums.

Passing under the archway of the Nagara-khaneh, one arrives at the Street of Gebbehkhaneh, where the tram terminus is. In front is the principal entrance of the bazar, flanked by two towers battlemented and covered with blue tiles, leading to the Sabz-Meidan (or Square of Verdure), rebuilt by Nasr-ed-din Shah as a mark of his interest in commerce. In the middle of this square is a fountain surrounded by trees. On the four sides of the square are monumental gates, whose beautiful pointed arches covered with tiles give to the square an effect of grandeur. All around are shops kept by Armenians, displaying all sorts of objects imported from Europe.

CHAPTER VII

DOGS AND DERVISHES

THERE are no vestry arrangements in Teheran, and, as in Constantinople, it is the dogs that keep the streets scavenged. These dogs are of a species related to wolves and jackals, with tawny, bushy fur. They live in each quarter and important street or square, and form clans quite distinct from each other; and if a member of one of these clans ventures into a street belonging to another, he is chased with bites by all the members of the invaded clan, and no consideration would prevent them from tearing to pieces the intruder, who returns covered with blood to the territory of his clan. This is why the dogs that are seen peacefully lying and sleeping about the street, an occupation in which they spend the greater part of their time, all of them wear the marks of these fights—torn ears, gouged-out eyes, and so on. Most of them are also suffering from mange, which eats into their bodies, emaciated by irregular diet. Considering their condition, it is no wonder that the Persians look upon them as impure. No Mussulman ever makes a pet of a dog. He keeps it as a useful beast to guard his house and his garden, and during the

night lets it loose on the roof of his house to keep away robbers. The incessant barking of the dogs on the roofs, which are the only noises that trouble the silence of the Oriental night, have given a foundation to the following legend :—

The jackals of the desert, tired of their privations, and envying the safe and peaceable life of the town dogs, their brothers, proposed to them to change situations. But when the exchange was made, and they had tasted of the vicissitudes of captivity, they had only one desire—to go back to the free life of the desert. From the roofs of their prisons they called for their brothers, but in vain ; to their barkings of distress the jackals and hyenas answered only by laughing barks. Since then every night there can be heard from one side the tormented bark of the captives, and from the other the laughter of the free.

The dogs of the streets look with indifference upon the passing human beings, and do not move to get out of their way. It is only at the passing of conveyances that they consent to interrupt their *dolce far niente*. But even then they rise only at the last moment, and that only to move just far enough not to be run over.

However, some of these dogs hate Europeans ; it is without doubt their instinct which tells them that these human beings with tight clothes will little by little destroy the peacefulness of their dominions, with their carriages, their trams, and the infernal machines they call motor cars.

There was an old dog in the Street of the Legations whose hatred for Europeans was as great as that of the most fanatical amongst the reactionary *Mollahs*.

He sprang upon all men of the Occident, and many a trouser has been torn, many a calf bitten by his fangs, those protectors of the national traditions. But one European, less patient than the others, freed the quarter from this dangerous Cerberus, by giving him with a treacherous hand a piece of poisoned meat.

When an animal died the Teherani used to content themselves with throwing him out into the street, where he was devoured by the dogs of the quarter; but for some time past there has been an ordinance of the police compelling people to transport the bodies of dead animals out of the town. This is why its gates are smelly with the bodies of dead horses, asses, and camels, over which the dogs fight with the jackals and hyenas.

One of the most familiar features of the streets in the East is the dervish. In Persia he is easily distinguished by several different signs: (1) the *taj*, or felt conical cap, embroidered with sentences of the Koran and names of the Imams, held on by hanging cords; (2) the *tabar*—a sort of mace made of steel, or a heavy wooden staff, studded with nails or pikes; (3) the *kashkoul*—a gourd (or occasionally a cocoanut) suspended by chains, for collecting alms; (4) the *guizou*, or long curling hair falling on the shoulders; (5) the girdle of cord to which are suspended wooden beads;

(6) a panther's or wolf's skin, flung over the shoulders like a highland shepherd's plaid, with the hair outwards ; (7) the horn, which he blows violently to call attention to his approach. And sometimes, over all, he wears a patchwork cloak, made of all sorts of odd materials. He sometimes wears sandals and sometimes goes barefoot.

Many dervishes wear an entirely white garment, which has seldom preserved any of its primitive purity. They never cut their hair or beards, and some are said never to eat anything but fruit, proclaiming that to let the body suffer enriches the soul. "Why should we try to keep our feeble body clean, knowing that after death it will become the prey of worms?"

As a matter of fact, they make no such attempt. Nor would it be easy with the sort of life they live, as they spend all their days in the street, and have no homes except the tents which they pitch against the walls of the houses of rich people. They are dreamy and lazy, spending a great deal of their time in smoking hashish and opium. When anyone passes, they always shout, *haq, haq*—truth. They travel from town to town and village to village: when they have exploited one place they go to another.

They are more tolerated than liked; for one who is a good man, there are many deceivers or thieves. Some make money out of human credulity by selling talismans or remedies; others by telling stories; and others again by behaving as if they were mad in order to win more

sympathy and respect. And sometimes they really are mad—the result of hashish and opium. There was one on the road of Shimran who was quite intoxicated with opium; he used to go about half naked. He had built a little hut of stones without cement, and had traced out a garden with stones; he used to lie concealed, and when a traveller passed by, would suddenly jump up and shout, *haq, haq*, which startled the horse.

During the holy months the dervishes pitch their tents at the gates of the richest men in the city. It is a sort of enforced tax, for they stay there until they have received the sum of money which they consider he is rich enough to pay them. The first few days they content themselves with being very polite to the people of the house, offering greetings, handing a flower or leaf, or some fruit; but after a few days, when they think too little money has been given them, they begin to blow their horns every minute, and their shouts of *haq* and *Allah-Akbar* make life unbearable. Thanks to these energetic expedients, it is rare for them not to receive the tax they have levied. In spite of the nuisance, there is no attempt to do away with them.

Much knowledge is not required to make a good dervish: bluff is his strongest weapon; impudence, flattery, discrimination of people's character, are more necessary than learning.

However, it is true that there are men who have been led by philosophical reasons to take up the profession of dervish, in the proper sense of the word; which

means poverty, humility, and a disregard for the natural goods of this life.

I met a man belonging to a rich and powerful family of Shiraz. He had abandoned his family and given his goods to the poor, and turned a dervish, because his convictions led him to believe that this was the true life. He was a poet of some reputation, and led the nomad life of ordinary dervishes, begging alms and smoking opium.

Zehir-ed-Dowleh is also a dervish. It is said that he has given to the poor the greater part of his wealth. He affects a very simple life in the midst of his luxurious palace, and extends his hospitality to every dervish who comes to him. There is always one with him, keeping him company till another takes his place.

He is an important member of the dervish community, and assists at the general meetings of the Dervish Order, which take place in Teheran in the greatest secrecy. Dervishes are supposed to do good and help the poor, like the begging friars in Roman Catholic countries, to which they may in many respects be compared.

There are boy dervishes, who are, as it were, the novices of the profession. They serve the others, light their pipes, and learn wisdom and the use of intoxicants: the wisdom of the street dervish is to enjoy the good things of life, and banish its sorrows as much as possible. That is why they avoid having any family.

There was a young woman-dervish also, begging



A Dervish.

and smoking with them, but I don't know how far she was a member of the order.

One of the most remarkable dervishes of Teheran was a huge negro of Abyssinia, with his hair trained up like a cap (see illustration on opposite page). His life had been one of extraordinary vicissitudes: he had been brought as a slave from his country when a boy, and, thanks to his beautiful appearance and his strength, had been bought by a Kajar prince to ride with him as an attendant. After this he attracted the notice of a wealthy widow, who married him. During her lifetime his gorgeousness was almost inconceivable. He went about on a beautiful horse, covered like himself with gold and diamonds and the brilliant colours in which the negro delights. But when his wife died, the heirs stripped him not only of all his wealth, but of his very clothes, till he was left with hardly more than a shirt to his name. Thus disenchanted, he became a dervish.

CHAPTER VIII

TYPICAL PERSIANS

ONE of the most fascinating Persians whom I met was His Highness Zehir-ed-Dowleh, the Minister of Ceremonies of His Majesty Musaffer-ed-din, whose sister he had married. He belonged to the Imperial tribe of Kajars. His father had left him an immense fortune, and nearly all the European quarter of the town belonged to him. But, very generous and Orientally lavish, he spent a great part of it, and on becoming a dervish gave the rest away. However, he went on living in a very beautiful palace in a royal way, as he had an important appointment from the Government, and his wife was of course rich. His palace, newly built, was divided, like every Persian house, into two parts: the *enderoun*, or harem, a huge white building with gardens in its quadrangles; and, occupying the centre of a park, the *biroun*, his reception apartments, which looked like a lantern, being glazed all round and encircled with a colonnade. Several rooms were furnished in the European style. It is much to be deplored that the leading people in Persia are beginning to Europeanise their lives. Only one room in this palace was kept quite Persian: it was the library,

furnished with bookcases, carpets, and cushions; it was a sort of sanctuary for a poet, and Zehir-ed-Dowleh is a poet—one of the most delicate and precious poets of the present time.

He is a tall, handsome man, with mysterious and fathomless eyes—"eyes which look into the heart"; his heavy moustache, carefully brushed up, shadows a rather sardonic smile, expressive of a free mind which Islam has not encircled with its iron grip. Under his kolah curls hair nearly fair. His engaging gestures, his soft voice, his exquisite politeness, and his conversation, bright and always adorned with extremely poetical ideas, make him a most charming host. He has remained Persian in the best sense of the word, and very often reminded me of the personages in the "Thousand and One Nights," especially when he wore the gorgeous Oriental robes connected with his functions at Court. Our chief connecting link was music; he was very fond of Persian, and also of European music, and had a European secretary who was a remarkable pianist. He himself could play the piano, but contented himself with the airs of his own country. I met him on my first night in Teheran at the Grand Vizier's party, and when he learned that I was a musician he asked me to come and see him. We were soon intimate friends; at first our conversation was necessarily limited, as he did not know any European language, and my Persian was very inadequate, but my knowledge of his language and our friendship grew together.

His wife, Malikeh-Iran (Princess of Persia), had the reputation of being one of the most beautiful women of the kingdom. Owing to the fact that she was a princess of the Imperial family, sister of the Shah, he could have no other wife. He had three sons and two daughters, with an equal reputation for beauty. His eldest son, who was about sixteen, was the most beautiful Persian I ever saw. He was, like his father, very gifted, but his talents ran specially in the direction of painting, which he loved so much that he had no hesitation in giving up the advantages of his place at Court to go to Europe to study art.

Was it his love for the fantastic or the fact of his being a dervish¹ that gave Zehir-ed-Dowleh a craving for *hashish*? Anyhow, he revelled in it, and drew me such pictures of the ecstasies attainable by its use that I grew curious to cross the gates of its deceptive heaven. In spite of my prejudices, I tasted it several times. It is taken through a *kalyan* (water-pipe). The first time I smoked it nothing happened but a "hoarse throat"; the second time I had a little headache; the third time I began to feel the results of the drug. We had been dining together with several of his friends in the Persian way on the floor. On one side of the room, servants, dervishes, and other hangers-on were standing in an attitude of respect and humility.

After the dishes were cleared away, the pipe-bearer brought the *hashished kalyan*. As the guest of the

¹ See Chapter VII.



H.E. Zehir-ed-Dowleh, Master of Ceremonies.

evening, it was handed to me first. I took four or five puffs, coughed, and then the *kalyan* was handed round to the other guests. At the second turn I was aware of an indefinite sensation; at the third I felt an agreeable lassitude. Some cushions were brought and piled all round my back and head, and the musicians and dancers were ordered in. Little by little the lassitude increased, till I felt as if I were in a sort of a provisional Nirvana. Everything was couleur-de-rose. The music was the best I had ever heard, the dances were incomparable; but I had not the energy to express my admiration, the pronouncing of words seemed too much exertion. However, to be polite, I tried, with one side of my mouth, to express it in one syllable. Tea was brought, and I am ashamed to say that the servants had to hold the cups to our mouths, into which cigarettes were afterwards inserted and lighted.

With a great effort the host said, "I shall fill with gold the mouth of whoever tells the best story."

One of the dervishes began telling extraordinary things, probably without any meaning, which our ecstatic condition made us find very interesting. Several others spoke, but Zehir-ed-Dowleh wanted something better. He ordered his nazer (butler) to go out into the street and bring in the first beggar he could find. After a few minutes, during which a woman¹ told a story illustrated with monstrous mimics, an old man was brought in, walking with difficulty in a semi-intoxicated state. He

¹ See Chapter XVII.

said only a few words, which he would never have had the courage to say if he had not been drunk, and for which he would most certainly have received the bastinado otherwise, for it was a direct satire upon the master of the house. His mouth was filled with gold coins, and he was kicked out.

Little by little the fumes of *hashish* evaporated, and things returned to their natural ugliness—exaggerated by the reaction.

The night did not bring any nice dreams, as it is said to do in stories, but only a heavy sleep and a heavy awakening in the morning, with a sore throat, and a good intention, which did not go towards the paving of hell. It was one of the things which one is glad to have done—once—in order to know what it is like.

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Many will remember the little boy who accompanied Nasr-ed-din Shah in his travels in Europe, where he was very much noticed. His short stature made him look even younger than he was, and as he was not a prince, people wondered why he enjoyed so much importance. Since his story shows one of the queer sides of Oriental life, I think I may give it here.

Nasr-ed-din Shah, like all his subjects, was superstitious. He believed in the virtue of mascots, and the *porte-bonheur* on which he put all his faith was a marvellous black cat with long fur, the most remarkable specimen of that race which makes Persia a household word everywhere. He was persuaded that, thanks to

this animal, he avoided all accidents and shielded himself from assassins. He never allowed it to be parted from him; he had entrusted it to the care of one of his wives, Amin Agdas, who, thanks to that and to her cleverness, had, from the position of a servant, achieved one of the most prominent positions in the harem.

Even in the shooting-parties the cat mascot followed his august master, carried in a richly decorated basket by a horseman galloping behind His Majesty.

One day, in one of those dangerous moufflon-shooting parties in the mountains which the Shah loved, an accident happened to the cat, and it died. His Majesty was in despair, and furious, which meant many *bastinadoes*.

When he returned to the palace, all the Court greeted him with the downcast looks of a real mourning. In the harem it was still worse. It would perhaps mean the end of the influence of "the Wife of the Cat." Intrigues began all round to determine who should take her place. On every side mascots were discovered: one wife brought a little *guépard* which had conjured the evil eye, another a cock which had kept off lightning, a third a parrot which, by calling for her mistress, had put to flight robbers who had broken into the house during the night. And the sovereign sat gloomily downcast, not knowing to which he gave the preference, when a luminous idea came to Amin Agdas. She threw herself at the feet of the Shah, exclaiming, "Rejoice, Lord of all Perfections, by your sublime beard, what

happened was decreed by Providence in order that a second-rate mascot should give way to a first-rate one. My little nephew Manijeh is the most miraculous *porte-bonheur* that ever existed under the sun. Permit me to lay him at your august feet! I am your sacrifice!"

As if by chance, the little boy was close at hand. They brought him in, and the Shah, amused by his smiling and ingenuous appearance, cheered up, which was considered a sign of acceptance, and the boy, at the order of his aunt, took up his position, with his hands folded in the respectful attitude of a courtier. In Persia children have the gift of being able to look like adults.

This happened in the library of the harem, a small room covered with gay tiles. His Majesty, forgetting the incident, was watching with interest through the window-arcades the movements on the lake in his garden of the mandarin ducks which had been presented to him a little while before, when, all of a sudden, Manijeh, running towards the door, shouted, "Come out, Majesty, come out quickly!" The Shah started back, got up, and went out. At that very moment the ceiling of the room fell down, and the part of the wall at the foot of which the Shah had been sitting.

The little boy had saved the life of his sovereign. It was easy for his aunt to exploit this, and the Shah from that time forward never let the new *porte-bonheur*, to whom he gave the title of Aziz-es-Sultan (the Cherished of the Sovereign) out of his sight.

All the Court bowed to the bearer of such a title, and the boy, loaded with presents, adulated and honoured more than an actual son of the Shah, was soon spoilt to such an extent as to become unbearable. As he grew under the Shadow of the King of Kings, who gave him his daughter in marriage, he accustomed himself to absolute power, and demanded royal honours even from the highest personages. More tyrannous than the Shah himself, he obliged the Grand Vizier to stand in his presence when he himself was seated. He was hated, but feared, and never lost an opportunity of making fun at the expense of the personages of the Court, which often amused the Shah. As an instance of his insolence, one may mention that when the Shah went to pay his annual visit at the house of his son, Naib-es-Saltaneh (the Lieutenant of the Empire), and the latter gave a dinner to the personages of the suite, a huge table with covers for two hundred persons was laid in the park under a marquee near a large lake. The plates were specially made at the Sèvres factory, with the arms of Naib-es-Saltaneh on them. The boy regularly used to walk round the table, picking up the beautiful plates and throwing them into the lake. This used to amuse the Shah very much, though he contrived to hide it from his unhappy son, who dared not say a word to the favourite.

But everything has an end, and the favour which Aziz-es-Sultan enjoyed was killed by himself. It was in the mountains of Mazanderan, on one of the shooting expeditions when the Shah was hunting panthers. During

the afternoon siesta, Aziz-es-Sultan was playing with a revolver in his tent close to the tent of the Shah, when suddenly the weapon went off, and the bullet entered the Shah's tent. The Shah thought it was an attempt to murder, and had him arrested on the spot, in spite of all his explanations and protestations. The disgrace only lasted a short time, but when he was received into favour again he never quite recovered his old position, and when the Shah died, as he had only made enemies for himself, he tried to fly, but was caught and brought back to Teheran ; and if it had not been for his wife, who was a sister of the new Shah, he would have certainly been killed. The greater part of his wealth was taken from him, and now he leads the life of a fallen grandee, still sometimes invited to the official receptions. It was at a dinner at the Grand Vizier's that I met him : I sat next to him.



A GEORGIAN.

CHAPTER IX

A PERSIAN'S DAY

THE Persian is waked at sunrise by the Muezzin's call to prayer. His toilet does not take him long, because he puts his clothes on over his night-dress, which is a pyjama suit consisting of a collarless shirt buttoned down one side with long wide sleeves, but only reaching to the hips, and pantaloons made of white cotton. These constitute all the under-linen he has, and are only changed when he goes to the *hammam*. The poor people have generally only one set, so when they go to the *hammam* they wash their under-linen there, and have to wait till it is dry before they can dress again.

After these the Persian puts on his *alkalouk*, a close-fitting quilted undercoat made of printed chintz. It reaches nearly to the knees. It is not closed over the chest, but reveals the shirt front. Over that he wears a frock-coat with gathered skirts.

Upon his head, which has been covered all night by a little round skull-cap like a cardinal's calotta, he puts the *kolah*, a sort of top-hat without a brim, a real stove-pipe, made of Persian lamb. Very often he keeps the nightcap on under it, though the more modern Persian is

beginning to discard that. This costume was introduced by the present Kajar dynasty.

The dress the Persians formerly wore was much more Oriental and picturesque. It is still worn in the south of the country, but in the north, and especially in Teheran, very few except the Mirzas and the Mollahs—the Scribes and the Pharisees—retain it. It consists of the *alkalouk* mentioned before, over which is worn a longer tunic of the same shape, made of cloth, cashmere shawling, velvet, or silk, according to his means. This is called *kamerchin*. Over that he puts the *kolajah*, which may be described as a coat. It is looser than the *juba*, which is worn under it, a very full garment with large and long sleeves, under which the hands disappear. These two are made of fine cloth dyed grey or left its natural colour, the best quality of which is as thin as cashmere and comes from Kirman. The Persian says that when a shawl is a good quality you should be able to put it through a ring.

European cloth is seldom used for making purely Persian garments. When the Persian goes out he wears over all these an *abba*, which is made of a square of cloth with a hole cut in the centre for the neck and sewn up at the sides : it has two holes left for the hands, and is open in front. In the south these *abbas* are very often made of pale blue silk with stripes of gold or silver. The poor wear a *balapouch* of woollen felt, or sheep fur. In the winter the rich wear a sort of wide cashmere overcoat lined with fur and with a roll of fur all round. With that dress their

usual headgear in the south is a turban, which in the north is monopolised by the Mollahs, who wear white turbans, and the Seyyids, who, being descendants of the Prophet, wear blue or green turbans. But the *kolah* is more the national head-dress in Persia.

In the olden times this *kolah* was worn covered with a white or coloured cashmere shawl. Gradually this became a privilege granted by the Shah, and now only certain persons are allowed to wear it, and that only on official occasions.

The Persian attaches great importance to dress. It is his first consideration as soon as he acquires any money. Dress is, in fact, his passport into society, because it is by his dress that he is judged.

As soon as he is dressed, the Persian takes one of those odd-shaped jugs of water to make the ablutions prescribed by his manual of religion; then he says his prayers, drinks a glass of tea, smokes a *kalyan* (water-pipe), and goes off to his business. Between eleven and twelve his lunch (*nahar*) is brought to him, a solid meal consisting of pilaws and chilaws—baked rice served with meat or vegetables and moistened with butter, sauces, or gravy, or left dry. With this he drinks sherbets and eats fruit. When he has finished he generally takes a siesta, and at two or three o'clock goes to his business again or pays and receives calls. The working classes naturally lead a simpler life: it depends on their means. For them the lunch consists often only of bread and cheese flavoured with mint-leaves. The siesta is for the poor as well as

the rich in this "pleasant" country, where there is always some time to be wasted.

The Persian never loses any of the thousand occasions that arrive in the course of the day for drinking tea. He takes it not in cups but in little glasses, in which it is served boiling. He does not drink it, he sips it, and often, instead of putting the sugar into his glass, he takes it between his lips and sucks up the tea, through it. He never takes milk in his tea, but likes a slice of lemon; and there is no lemon which ranks so high as the tiny round green lemon with a dry hard skin grown at Shiraz. Tea is, of course, always accompanied by endless *kalyans* and cigarettes.

Visiting is one of the Persian's principal amusements: he spends hours at the *hammam* (Turkish bath). These *hammams* are often handsome buildings, and have very inviting entrances decorated with arabesque tiles, painted with scenes from the *Shah-nameh*, and inscribed with religious exhortations to frequent bathing.

The smallest village has its *hammam*: it shares with the mosque the honour of being the most frequented public building, bathing being almost a religious function, since it was ordained by the Prophet. When he has finished with the hot room and the massage, the Persian is shaved and depilated; the whole top of his head is shaved, though the hair over the ears is left and allowed to grow down to the neck, where it is curled upwards.

Nothing is queerer in the *hammam* than the collection of bald heads.

Tradition relates that Louis XIV. started the fashionable full wig because he had no hair. It was not a prince or personage who made baldness the fashion in Persia. The peculiar Persian coiffure has really a religious signification. The two locks on each side of the head are left for the Angel of Death to hold when he is carrying the believer to paradise.

The last part of the bath is devoted to dyeing the hair and beard. All Persians have their hair washed with henna, to which vesmeh is added to make it black.¹ The old men of the lower classes and the peasants use only henna, and their hair and beards become quite red. This is one of the things which strike you first when you go to Persia ; and as the peasants do not dye their beards often enough, the centre part is apt to be white.

Gossip, story-telling, tea, and *kalyan* smoking make the baths a very pleasant lounging place.

As business ends between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, the Persians have plenty of time to go to the *hammam*, pay visits, and go to the tea-house, which is their café. The word tea-house suggests mousmés and other Japanese frivolities, but the Persian *tchäi-khaneh* are simply cafés where people take tea instead of coffee. They are large rooms containing huge Russian samovars made of copper, and with rows of lamps and lustres on their walls. There is generally a garden on one side of them.

In the spring the chief attraction of the *tchäi-khaneh*

¹ See Henna, Chap. XXVII.

are the nightingales : every one of them has its nightingale, and the best singer attracts most customers. These nightingales cost from ten to twenty tomans—about two to four pounds each—and they are the subject of a cult. In the cage of each of them is a rose, to which they are supposed to sing.

All the gossip of the bazars and the Court are retailed at the *tchäi-khaneh*, but they are only frequented by the men of the lower orders and the servants. When the nightingales stop singing, the dervish story-tellers begin. They tell marvellous and interminable tales, in which the Persians take great pleasure. Nasr-ed-din Shah ordered the tea-houses of Teheran to be closed, on the pretext that they encouraged idleness and various other vices, but little by little they opened again.

The aim of Persians is to kill time till the dinner-hour. The guests arrive at sunset ; the reception-room—*talar*—is the principal room of the house, of which it occupies the centre. It is raised about four or five feet above the level of the courtyard, and the front is entirely taken up with windows of the English pattern. The floor is covered with carpets, and one end is higher in social distinction than the other. Here will be found the two most beautiful carpets in the house. Persians love pairs : when they want a lamp they buy two, and when they want to be especially European and have pictures, they will buy two exactly the same—chromo-lithographs in beautiful frames.

There is usually no furniture in their rooms, and when



A MINGRELIAN.

by chance there is a table, the Persians use it to hold flower-pots or crystal candelabra ; it is the ground which they use as a table. In some houses there is a sort of mattress in the upper part of the room, where the master of the house and his most honoured guests sit.

When the guests come in, the master of the house rises and greets them, saying, "You have brought happiness." A conversation in this strain follows, and some of the compliments they pay are very absurd to our ears. It is quite complimentary to say, "Your nose is so fat : I am glad to see how fat your nose is." It means, "You look well," an allusion to the thinness of the nose meaning bad health. The master of the house then offers his seat, the best in the room, to the guest, unless a more important one is coming or the master of the house is more important than his guests. Then *kalyans* and tea are brought in.

The *kalyan* is a bottle full of water. It has a nozzle of carved wood with a long narrow stem inserted in it. On the top of it is the bowl of silver, or brass, or copper, which contains the tobacco. Little chains hang down from it. Common *kalyans* are made of pottery ; but the best ones are of china, or gold inlaid with enamels and a quantity of little turquoises. When the *kalyan* is made of glass, the Persian often puts cherries, rose-leaves, or jasmine into it, which dance about in the hubble-bubble. The body of the *kalyan* is sometimes made of a cocoanut shell or of china, and there are hideous ones, which the Persians love, made in Russia of common

china decorated with flowers and medallions containing portraits of the Shahs ; these are very much *à la mode*.

The preparation of the *kalyan* is a very important thing, and not at all easy ; it needs a special servant who understands it. He takes full leaves of tobacco, puts them into the water, and squeezes them with his hand before filling them into the top of the pipe. Then he puts a live ember attached to a string into a cage full of charcoal and swings it round and round. In a minute or two it ignites all the other charcoal, which is laid upon the wet tobacco leaves, and strong breaths are drawn in until the pipe is lighted.

The *kalyan* is then taken in by an attendant, and offered to the guest who occupies the highest place. Before accepting it, he makes a formal offer of it by gesture to the master of the house, and every guest in turn, with a smile and a bow. They all refuse it—he knows that they will. He then takes two or three puffs and hands it back to the servant, who lifts off the head and draws out the smoke left in the tube before replacing the head, because it would be wanting in politeness to leave any smoke in it. The same thing is repeated as it is offered to each guest in succession.

When the important guest arrives, everybody rises, and the master of the house goes forward to greet him. The great man bows to everyone, and a discussion about the place of honour commences. He knows quite well that he will take it, but he makes a great show of declining it, and at last goes and sits on it quite suddenly.

He sinks on his knees after spreading his long coat under him, and turns his toes in to make a circle of them, a more comfortable way of squatting than that adopted by most Orientals. When he is seated he bows again to the master of the house and to each guest, one after the other, mumbling something, which cannot be heard, between his teeth, but always with a smile.

The assembled guests go on nibbling melon seeds grilled in salt, grilled pistachios, and monkey nuts. Then, although it is forbidden by religion, wines and spirits are brought in, in very beautiful green glass bottles powdered with gold. Shiraz wines are the best. The wine is drunk not in glasses, but in cups without pedestals, which are made of copper, and much ornamented with figures of women and sentences from the poets who have sung in praise of wine. Arrack, a white spirit distilled from rice, is also drunk. Then the musicians come in, one playing a zither, another the *aoud*, a sort of guitar often mentioned in the *Arabian Nights*; another a sort of violin, which he plays kneeling with the instrument resting on the ground—it has some fine 'cello notes; and a fourth playing a tomtom. The singer and dancers follow; the former chants in the high falsetto so dear to the Oriental: it begins with variations on the word *delem*—my heart; then the song, a sad, slow *mélopée*, drones on and on, till it suddenly breaks off like a harp-string. It soars and soars, as a bird shot through the head rises on fluttering wings and suddenly drops. The dancers are boys or women, and we

should call them acrobats and contortionists rather than dancers.

All through the performance the guests go on drinking arrack and getting more and more excited. They clap their hands, not in applause, but to mark time, till things culminate in a pandemonium. The guests then see that dinner-time is come: in some houses it is prepared in an adjoining room, but it is more usual for it to be brought into the same room by the attendants. First a leather napkin is spread under the linen napkin. The Persian bread, called *sangak*, is flat; it is called *sangak* from *sang* (stone) because the bread is baked in an oven which has a floor composed of pebbles, and sometimes pieces of pebble stick to the bread and break your teeth. In appearance it is very like pancake: it is only crust, and is very good. This bread is spread all round the table; it takes the place of plates, as it did in the banquets in the Middle Ages in England, and is always used as a spoon to eat the soup with.

On the tablecloth are laid a number of dishes, some of them with silver covers, others with covers of plaited straw. These dishes are most of them composed of rice, and are divided into two main classes—*chilaws* and *pilaws*: *chilaws* are those which are prepared without any sauces, there is always some rice roasted to a golden colour upon them; *pilaws* are made with sauce. The national dish of Persia is the *chilaw-kebab*; *kebab* are little slices of mutton skewered together with the leaves of aromatic plants between them, and they are eaten

with rice mixed up with the yolk of a raw egg. The eggs are brought in cut in half and embedded in sand. The guests throw the yolk on the rice for themselves, and mix it up with their fingers. There is a very popular *pilaw* called *fissenjan*; it is made of pomegranates, nuts, and almonds, pounded up into a sauce which they eat with chicken. Persians have only two meats, mutton and chicken. Pork is forbidden, so are hares and crustaceans.

No knives or forks are used in eating, only the fingers of the right hand. Each person has a little plate of curds placed in front of him, of which he partakes all through the meal. On the cloth are huge bowls full of sherbet, made of various fruits, water, and ice. It is often cooled with snow: large quantities of snow are stored in underground cellars. The guests help themselves to drink: in each of the bowls is an elaborately carved wooden spoon; when they wish to drink, they drink out of this spoon, and put it back.

Persians put quantities of fruit on the table; they enjoy the beauty of its appearance even when they are not eating it, just as we enjoy flowers. In all pictures of Persian entertainments you see fruit on the ground, like the daisies in Fra Angelico's pictures.

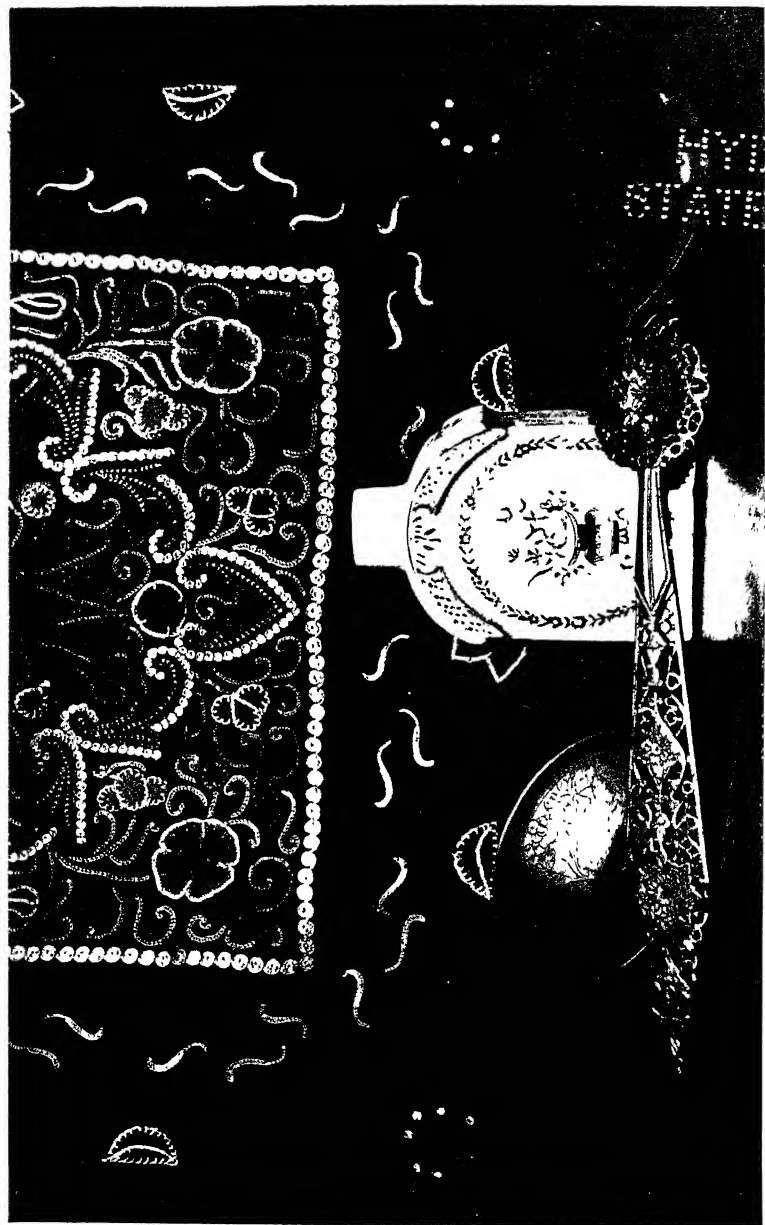
They have some dishes of Turkish origin, one of the most famous of which is the *Imam-boyaldeu*, which means the dish that made the priest faint with delight. It consists of aubergine (egg-fruit), one of the vegetables most esteemed in Persia, with stuffing and a very aromatic

sauce. Another Turkish dish which often comes on the Persian menu is *dolma*, which consists of mince and rice wrapped up in a vine-leaf. Tomatoes were unknown to the Persians till they were introduced by Europeans; so they are called European aubergines—*badenjan franghi*.

The Persian's favourite vegetable is cucumber, especially when taken with curds: if ever you hear of a person dying of indigestion, you may be sure that it will be put down to cucumber and curds. You must not drink when you have partaken of this dish, because it will only make you thirstier, and the drink causes the cucumber to expand and give you frightful indigestion; when you have eaten it, you must go to sleep for an hour. The sweet is always rice, which the Persians prepare in many ways: it is sometimes seasoned with orange-peel and pistachios.

The Persians do not drink wine during a meal, but they drink a great deal before and after, not because they enjoy its taste, but for the sake of the intoxicating effects.

The most important guests sit at the head of the table; the host takes his place in the order of precedence to which his social position entitles him. At the foot of the table sit the musicians, who often eat with the guests. The meal commences by servants coming round with ewers; each guest has his right sleeve turned up and his right hand washed by having water poured over it, the right hand only being used for eating. There is hardly any conversation during the meal; the guests eat very



Cup, sherbet spoon, tea-caddy, and gouldouzi embroidery.

quickly but very solemnly. The host hands choice morsels to those whom he specially wishes to honour; they are obliged to eat these morsels with good grace, no matter how much they may dislike them.

When the meal is ended the ewer is brought round again, this time filled with rose-perfumed water. The guests then get up and smoke *kalyans*. Some of them may remain all night and sleep there; others will have their servants to fetch them, with the enormous lanterns called *fanous*, which are generally white with a red stripe round them.

Much of the day is spent in visiting and conversation. The gossip of the Court and the town passes from mouth to mouth, embellished with such commentaries and exaggerations that it soon becomes completely transformed.

Intrigue enters much into the Persian's life: he is always working for some favour, the granting of some petition, the putting right of some business, the arrangement of some judicial verdict, or the acquisition of some pension, title, or post. No Persian who has the slightest education despairs of seeing himself one day occupying an important position in the State. Many water-carriers have become Grand Viziers since the times of the good Haroun-ar-Rashid.

The surprises in the life of a Persian, the small security which his Government gives, induces him to take the wildest risks for what we should call "off-chances," which have afforded such wonderful examples

of success, while even the highest personage cannot ignore the fact that to-morrow he may become a beggar. For the Shah has the power to confiscate all his goods, and in Persia it is dangerous to come down, for the "golden cup," or a cup of doctored coffee, so often follows the downfall.

The word which you hear oftenest in conversation is *flouss*, which means money. Then comes the word *moudakhel*, which is not translatable; to say that it means a commission, or a bribe, or a *douceur*, is to take off the subtilty of its meaning. The *moudakhel* represents the profit, more or less illicit, which every Persian considers a duty to realise in exchange for a favour or a service. The Shah himself, far from disdaining the *moudakhel*, exacts it without fail whenever he extends mercy to a culprit or bestows a title upon an ambitious courtier. Even before a judge arguments must have the ring of gold to be of any weight, since the Persian law is so elastic and so easy to interpret, according to the necessities of the moment, that the judge who interprets it would be very much embarrassed if he had no *moudakhel* to guide him.

Time has no value in the lands of Islam. *Ferda*—*i.e.* to-morrow—is always on the lips. An hour is easily spent in bargaining for a water-melon, and if it was not sold in the end, no Persian would dream of regretting the loss of time.

CHAPTER X

THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSIANS (LYING A FINE ART)

THE Persians are said to be the French of the East. Like them, they are gay : the Mussulman religion has not set upon them that stamp of haughty and meditative sadness which is so marked in the Arabs and the Turks. They have the explanatory and communicative gestures of the French, their exuberance, their love of feasts and rejoicings, their loquacity, their artistic taste, their tendency towards scepticism, or at least towards philosophic speculations which border on it, their critical and caustic spirit.

No other people is so courteous in receiving a visitor ; even if the Persian is indifferent to you, he will not omit the compliment which he believes you will feel most. It is difficult to exaggerate the Persian's courteousness, the kindness, and, at the same time, the dignity, scarcely noticeable on account of the simplicity in which it is wrapt, the poetical terms and citations used ! All this, added to his exoticism and the grandeur inherited from a glorious past, makes intercourse with the Persian exquisite.

Without doubt it is better not to scratch the civilised man, or you may discover the barbarian who sleeps, and generally sleeps with only one eye. For behind this courteousness are the philosophic hatred—that strong hatred which springs from the clashing of ideas, above all of religious ideas—and the profound scorn which, in spite of himself, every Mussulman has for the creatures whom Allah judged unworthy of being enlightened with the Faith, and therefore destined for hell. The greatest Persian curse is *Peder soukhteh* (burnt father). The fact of being a Christian is the most powerful reason for deserving this epithet. Even in the eyes of the sceptical Persian—or one who believes that he is so—Christianity is not less a blemish ; the feeling is instinctive.

The same man who drops rose petals under your feet in order to make them avoid the hardness of the road, will not hesitate to make you suffer the most cruel tortures. He delights in the murmur of the rivulet in the moonshine, but the sound of blood flowing from an open wound has also for him its fascination. The singing of the nightingale fills him with rapture in the night, but he quivers with pleasure at the cry of pain from a victim.

In this he could not be better compared than to the Roman of the decadence, Persian that he is of a supreme decadence, a decadence bordering on decay ; for of all these *beaux sentiments* which have made the greatness of humanity, there remain to him only the appearances. However, we must be thankful to the



Characteristic Persian Garden belonging to H.H. Naib-es-Sultaneh

Persian for knowing how to keep up these appearances, and with a serenity which would deceive the devil. *Du reste*, he is deceived himself, for it is improbable that he would reach such a perfection without any sincerity.

He is, however, an exquisite being: how can one help admiring him? If he has a right to our admiration for his charm and fascination, he deserves our indulgence for the rest, since his religion and his Government have condemned him for many centuries to every species of dissimulation, servitude, and baseness, to the atmosphere of uncertainty for the morrow, the absence of justice and of rights. Also, it might be urged that the traditions of cruelty inherited from his ancestors, who used to pierce the eyes of their captives, would be some excuse for the barbarous side of his character, were it not that he has lost the tradition of courage.

He loves meetings, fêtes, and music. In springtime, flowers and the singing of the nightingale play an important part in his life; in gardens by the side of little rivulets he delights in devising and reciting from Sa'di and Hafiz, and in hearing the singing of the nightingale whose cage he has hung from the neighbouring tree. This cage is of precious wood with golden bars, and is always full of flowers, because it is thought that the nightingale dedicates his song to them. In the poems the nightingale is supposed to fall in love with the rose and sing to it.

Of lying the Persian has made an institution—if "lie" is the proper term to designate the picturesque

way in which he gives free play to his prolific imagination. Can a mirage decently be called a lie? There is always some mirage reflected in the Persian's thought. Amplification, embellishment, illumination, would be a more exact term to designate the "running lie" which enamels all Persian conversation.

The Persian does not consider a lie a sin. He thinks that we have a bad opinion of lying because we *do not know how to lie*, and if he shows an unbounded confidence in everything the Europeans say, it is chiefly because he thinks that we are totally devoid of the *gift*. It may be said that he lies for the sake of lying. In Persian conversation it takes so important a place that the unfortunate truth is quite drowned. Truth is a distant and inaccessible goddess; she must have been afraid of risking her delicate complexion under the burning Persian sun, so she prudently remains at the bottom of her well, beneath a shroud of unfathomable water. There is a Persian dictum that it is better to tell a lie which will do good than a truth which will do harm.

Napier Malcolm speaks thus of the bewildering topsyturvydom of Persia: "An Englishman when in doubt tells the truth. A Persian in doubt tells a lie. This would be more tolerable were it not that a Persian is always in doubt. In Persia security is a thing unknown, and telling lies becomes part of the instinct of self-preservation. Then again the lies are of a new kind. Lies in England are generally told to deceive people in some particular; in Persia they are just as frequently

told in order to make the very search for truth impossible. When I have had to examine into cases of petty theft amongst schoolboys, I have found that to get at the truth is an almost superhuman task. English boys, if they do not tell the truth, will at least tell as few falsehoods as possible, if for no other reason than to avoid being found out. Persian boys will not only lie on the subject they wish to conceal, but they will tell as many untruths as they can cram into the story, so as to render any attempt at investigation futile. Of course you know that they are lying, but as they never imagine that you will suspect them of telling the truth, they are not much deterred."

There is always the *true lie*, here as everywhere else. But, like the sun, it shines more brightly on the land of Iran. Though not taken seriously, its share is generally a pretty large share—for one knows what talking means. Just as in the Persian's gambling, cheating is not considered knavery, since everybody cheats; so the lie becomes with him one of the *rules* of the game, and the match is only made more interesting by it.

The Persian is also a great gambler. He has always been celebrated at chess, but cards are not less popular in Persia. They are nice little cards in *vernish martin* like lacquer, real masterpieces for which the artists give a free rein to their imagination. The Queens are represented in the most varied costumes and attitudes, and often with very little veiling for Oriental women.

This is, of course, the picture of the characteristic Persian. It would not be right to conclude from it that one does not meet in Persia, as everywhere else, people essentially respectable and honest—but why should we speak of these?

There are many fine qualities which we must allow the Persian. One of the most moving is the patriarchal respect he pays to his parents. The son is the humble servant of his father: he never sits in his presence unless he is repeatedly urged to do so by him; he would not smoke before him on any pretext.

The Persian has not the slightest idea of patriotism to Persia, which is only a geographical expression to him. His patriotism is parochial, and stronger than prejudice. A Persian poet who was far from his native place wrote: "Build my tomb upon a height, that the wind may carry the vapours of my body to the spot where I was born."

Many Europeans living in Persia, who do not know how to make allowances, show great injustice towards the Persians, whom they pronounce "the lowest of the nations." They delight in enumerating their defects and their vices, as if they had none themselves, or in order to appear more pure in their own eyes. They go no farther than the Persian language to find support of their opinions. It is true that since thankfulness finds no room in the golden book of Persian qualities, there exists no word in their vocabulary to say "Thanks."

They say instead, *Luft-i-shuma ziyad* (May your kindness grow), which seems to mean, "May your attentions grow," or, with lesss elfishness, *Zell shuma kam nacharad* (May your shadow never grow less), which is really kind-hearted.

They swear by your salt, by your beloved life, by your death: which means, "May you die if I have lied." And in this it is once more a compliment that they mean to pay to you, for they show that they fix an infinitely higher price on your life than on their own.

One of those Europeans who believe themselves to be victims of Eastern perfidy has given to me as a proof of it the following tale, which recalls Frederick the Great and the Mill of Sans-Souci.

The governor of the Southern province, in which the nightingales are most famous for their singing, extended every year the length of his palace garden. He adored flowers, verdure, and huge sheets of water, which recall the river Kouther in the Garden of Paradise. He was more feared than loved by his subjects, by whom he had managed not to be hated, for he used the velvet glove on the iron hand, and thus he constantly saw his fortune growing. Political fortune often follows the same path as monetary fortune: the prince therefore stood well at Court.

All this made the progressive growth of his gardens easy. Who would dare refuse to sell his lands to such a powerful lord?

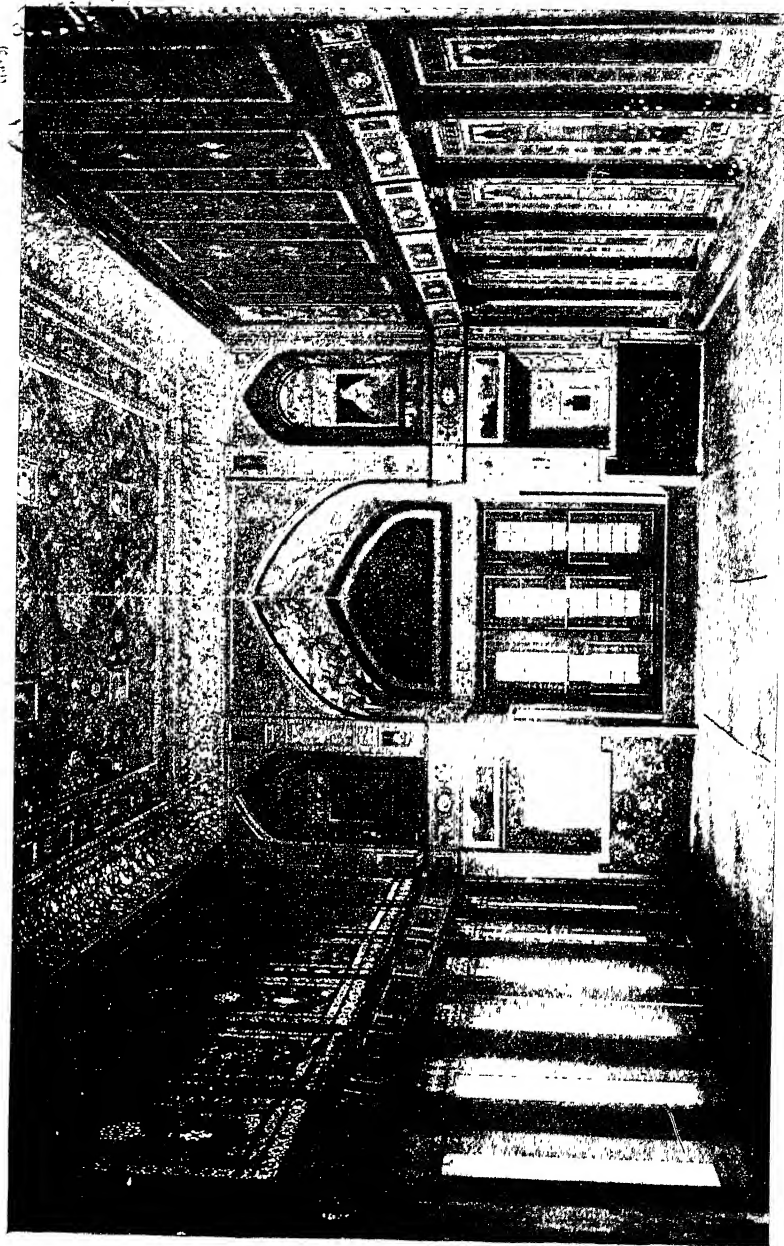
Once it happened that a poor old peasant had the

courage and the obstinacy or conceitedness which has immortalised the miller of Sans-Souci, who was so deaf to the offers and threats of the great Frederick. He did not want to give up to the prince the wretched cube of earth which had been his dwelling during all his life, and which his father had built with the soil of the road.

The prince was at first astonished. He wanted to see the man who did not fear to stand up to him. The poor old man was brought to him, and he received him amiably, so amiably that the fellow, who expected the bastinado or worse, came very near to yielding everything. However, he thought better of it, and kept his resolutions so well that the prince threw away the velvet glove and showed the iron hand. The threat only had the effect of hardening the old man in his obstinacy and his refusal. He was put in prison in order that he might reflect, which increased his obstinacy—he must have been of Turkish origin. Every morning a man of the prince's came to ask him if the night had brought him sense. But he remained obdurate.

Driven to extremity, the prince thought of another plan, and his servants came to tell the old man that His Highness had set him free.

"Praise be to God!" exclaimed he, and he thanked the Lord. He was advised also to bring his thanks to the feet of the prince, who was so magnanimous to him, and he was driven to the *talar*, where His Highness was trying upon starlings some guns sent to him from Europe.



A hall in a Persian palace

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“May the attention of His Highness grow ; may his shadow never be less ; and may the blessings of God be spread upon him as numerous as the stars in the firmament.”

With a smile the prince dismissed him : “ *Mourakhas esti.*”

And, after many salaams, the old man retired. He had only gone a few paces when the prince shouldered his gun, fired, and killed the clod who was going back unmoved to his cube of mud.

CHAPTER XI

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN PERSIA

IN ancient Persia before the days of Zoroaster, women are said to have had a position as good as that of men. The great Persian sage, far from abolishing such a state of things, confirmed it with his authority. He thought that improving the education and intellectuality of the mother, and treating her with respect, would be the best thing for making her sons more civilised. But Persian women do not enjoy this Zoroastrian estimation in modern society, where their inferiority to men is most marked. Some people blame Mahomet for this state of affairs: this is not just; he did his best to raise the state of woman, who was simply an animal in the eyes of the Arabs of his day, among whom unlimited polygamy reigned.

But even Mahomet was unable to break through the conventions which kept woman in a state of servitude. Her education prepared her for this state of inferiority, as it still does. In the harem she grows up like a wild flower; nothing which Europeans generally keep out of their children's sight is concealed from her; she is left to the dictates of her instincts, which, as she sees very

little society but that of servants and slaves, are not very elevating. Her religion is drowned in the lowest superstitions, and as she is seldom taught to read and write, the only means she has of learning about things is from tales which would have hardly any meaning for us because they are so stupid.

In spite of this, some of the Persian women are poets of no mean ability ; their works are never published, they are seldom even circulated, for, after all the inroads made by civilisation into this country, the Persians are still of the opinion that nothing about a woman should be *en evidence*, in any way or under any circumstances. They even make it a reproach to Ayesha, the favourite wife of Mahomet, that she appeared at the head of an army. I should say, however, that the leaven of civilisation is beginning to affect the education of girls in the better families, which is often far less neglected now. Indeed, there are Persian women who are quite learned and can speak several languages.

À ce propos, a Persian who had been educated in Europe told me solemnly that he would never marry a woman who could read or write. I asked him why? And he replied that the reading of novels with descriptions of beautiful young men, and all the thousand tricks they play upon husbands, could only be bad for the peace of the home. It was in vain that I pointed out that young men playing tricks upon husbands do not form at all an ordinary plot in the novels of the West, while they are the usual subject of the story-

tellers of the harem. The Persian was unconvinced. All Persians are taught from their youth to be on their guard against woman's perfidy. It is an axiom with them that a man should never take a woman's advice, and should only listen to it with the definite intention of doing the opposite.

It is a canon with the Persians that woman must remain an inferior creature under the authority of man. So great is the constraint to which she is subjected, that her husband prefers her not going to the ordinary services in the mosques; he likes her to pray at home, or only go to the mosque when there will be few men there.

As might have been expected, there is generally no real intimacy between wife and husband in Persia. The husband's occupations and intercourse with his male friends and his business, if he has any, keep him away all day from the *enderoun*; it is usually quite late in the evening before he returns. Women never eat with their husband. The food is first taken to his apartments; when he and his friends have eaten all the tit-bits, it is handed on first to the women, then to the servants, and then to the poor in the streets. If a woman goes out with her husband, which is a very rare event, she has to walk a few paces behind. But even Japanese women have to do that.

A wife is never seen driving with her husband either in the town or in the country, so strong is the tradition for keeping the women apart. And the Persian women, like the Chinese, never accompany their husbands when

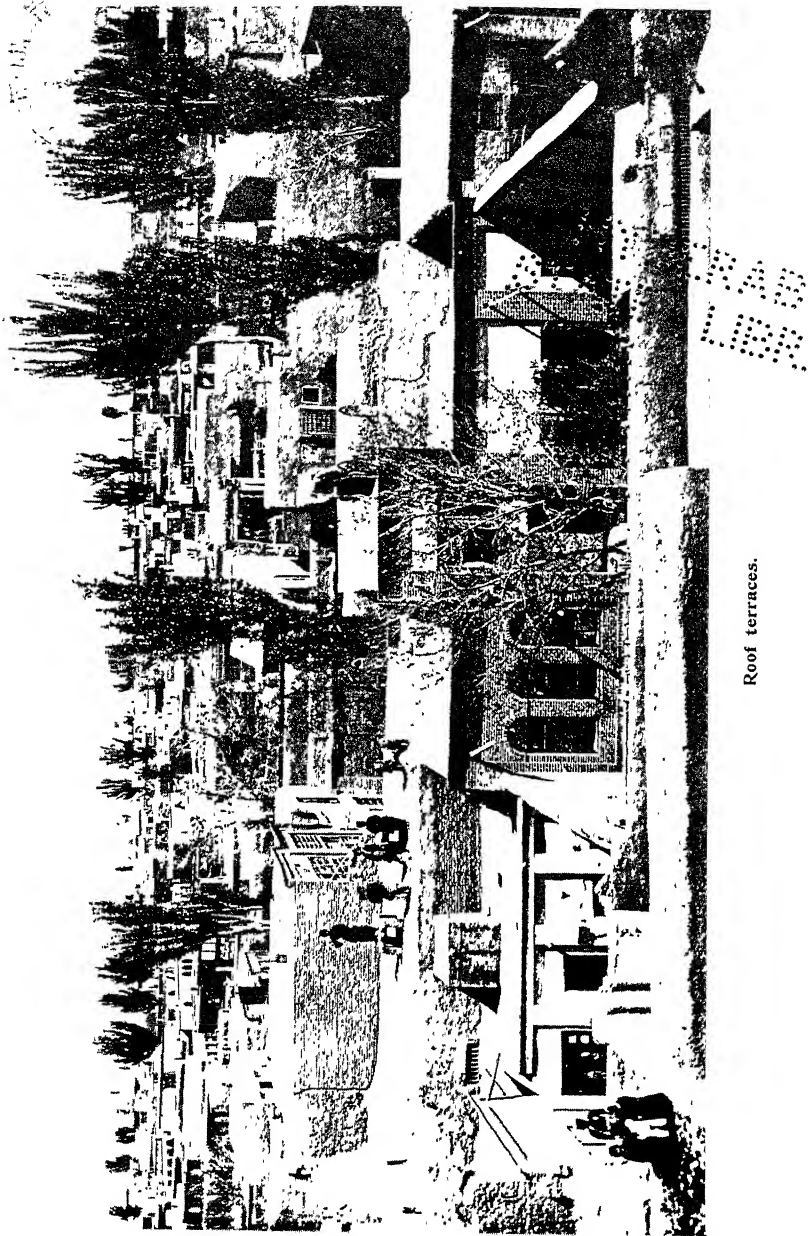
they leave their country. The only thing which ever takes them out of Persia is a pilgrimage to Kerbela or Mecca. It is said that scarcely any Persian woman has ever been in Europe. When a Persian diplomat was questioned on the subject, he replied, "It is impossible. What would be the life of our women in a country where their sex lives in such a totally different way? They are only allowed to go out closely veiled; think how they would feel this when every woman round them was unveiled. Even when your women have a veil, it is like a window; you can see through it. They could not go and visit your women, because there would be such a risk of their meeting men in houses where the sexes are accustomed to mix. What should we do for *enderouns* in houses arranged like yours? We should have to take a hospital or a prison to secure the proper isolation. That is why Nasr-ed-din gave orders that women were not to leave Persian territory. When he started out on his first trip to Europe, he took two of his wives with him, but he had hardly got as far as Moscow before he realised all the complications that would be caused by their presence. Therefore he sent them back there and then."

So prejudiced are the very strict Persians in the matter of the isolation of women, that they make a kind of text out of an anecdote which is related in the Book of Traditions. "One day, when Mahomet was sitting with Omar Mukhum, the blind man, one of his wives crossed the room. The Prophet reproached her with

her breach of the law. 'But the man is blind, else had I not done it, my lord.' 'But thou seest,' exclaimed the Prophet." This is considered to prove that not only must a man not see a woman, but a woman must not look at a man unless he is her husband or a near relation.

To ask a Persian about his wife is a grave breach of etiquette. The most you can do is to ask about the mother of his son.

The mystery which surrounds Persian women has to be impenetrable, and this has an effect even upon Persian architecture. The Persian house is built with a view to the isolation of the *enderoun*, the part of the house reserved to women. The name is derived from the Aryan root, *Inder*. The *enderoun* is sacred. Minarets are scarcer in Persian towns than they are in other Mussulman countries, because the Persians fear that the Muezzin who proclaim the hour of prayer so many times a day might penetrate the secrecy of the houses below. And where there are minarets the Muezzin seldom ascend them: they call the faithful to prayer from the roof of the mosque. The terraced roofs of the houses are separated by shoulder-high parapets to isolate them from each other. But in spite of that, men are supposed to go on them as little as possible. There is a story that a pigeon fancier, who was often on his terrace training his pigeons, took advantage of this to take furtive peeps at the courtyards of his neighbours. He was asked several times to give up the practice, and



Roof terraces.

because he did not pay any attention to these requests, was shot dead. The authorities never dreamt of molesting the person who had punished the trespasser on the secrecy which surrounds the harem.

The air of mystery which surrounds the Persian women extends to their outdoor dress, which conceals their form so completely as to leave them mere phantoms of humanity.

The Persian woman is what man has made her. To the rich man she is a luxury for the gratification of his pleasures, to the poor man a more or less useful animal until she becomes a mother. But the respect with which she then becomes invested is some compensation for the habitual indifference to which she has been subjected. Even then the behaviour of her husband and her family depends on the sex of the child : if it is a male, they are loud in their gratification ; if it is a female, they will not conceal their disappointment. As soon as the child is born the nurse goes to inform the husband, who will be waiting in the next room. If it is a son, she comes with manifestations of delight : "*Aferin!* you are the father of a son!" The husband is radiant, and he and all the family besiege her with congratulations. But if it is only a daughter she advances timidly and apologetically, and if he is a man in authority he may order her to be bastinadoed for telling him such bad news. In the old days she might have had her head cut off.

In great families, especially in the Royal Family, the

position of mother gives a woman a real influence. This may be felt in the management of her husband's affairs, though that is rather exceptional. She is more likely to take advantage of her influence in questions of personal interest. Her vision being restricted, feminine political influence is not often mentioned at Court, but many is the request laid before the Shah through the avenue of the harem.

It used to be different in the days of the Sefavi kings, who led effeminate lives, and preferred the pleasures of the harem to the excitements of war and hunting. When they were on the throne, it was by no means unusual for the favourites of the harem to exercise a direct influence in the affairs of State, and important official posts were occupied by eunuchs. That custom is not quite extinct: Eve and the serpent still lead man to a certain extent.

CHAPTER XII

PERSIAN WOMEN AND THEIR DRESS

THE poets of Persia, who, unlike other poets of the East, have quite a vogue in England, owing to the *Sohrab and Rustem* of Matthew Arnold and Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, have been so eloquent on the subject of the beauty of Persian women, that they are supposed to be the most beautiful in the world. When they are beautiful—and they often really are—the poets have not said too much, from their own standpoint. But their beauty, like that of the aristocratic Japanese, does not correspond with European ideas, if the poets are accurate in their descriptions. Their idea of women demands “the graceful form of a cypress, a waist as slender as a toothpick, the elastic gait of a tender fawn, a face like the moon on the fourteenth night, cheeks like a tulip, the eyes of a dying gazelle, lips like a bursting pomegranate, whose crimson makes rubies pale, and an expression as sweet as a sugar-eating parrot.” Some of these phrases convey no meaning at all to the matter-of-fact European, and even where their meaning is fairly clear one is not able to endorse them from the little one knows of the women. Why, for instance,

should the Persian woman be compared to a cypress, when she is generally short? and why should she be called as slender as a toothpick, when she is usually decidedly fat? (As a matter of fact, if she is not fat, she stands in imminent danger of a divorce, since the Persian demands embonpoint in the favourites of his harem.) In Europe, when one compares a woman's face to the full moon one does not as a rule mean to imply a compliment.

What, then, are the special beauties of the Persian woman when stripped of the hyperbole of Oriental poetry? The accepted Persian type of beauty has a very full, oval face; big black almond-shaped eyes, which would be sufficiently bright and mysterious without the assistance of the everlasting kohl; heavy eyelids, which seem to droop under the long, full lashes that cast a shadow on the face; very regular arched eyebrows, the curves of which are elongated with paint and made to taper off on the temple, though they almost join over the "birth" of the nose, where a blue patch cleverly adapted in the shape of a star separates them. The nose is small and aquiline, and is sometimes almost lost between the vivid crimson tulips on the cheeks, which, natural or otherwise, rival in intensity the brilliance of her sensual lips. The ground of her complexion is milky white; if Nature has not made it white, she makes it white for herself. On her cheeks the Persian woman wears another blue, star-shaped patch like that between her eyebrows. She seldom rests content with what



Persian woman in harem costume with a Kurdish headdress

Nature has done for her in the way of beauty. But a few years ago cosmetics went out of fashion, and the beauties of the harems lathered their faces with common soap and left it to dry, in order to make their skin shine as if it had been varnished. It is acknowledged that many "a full moon" did glitter more brilliantly; but the obvious inconveniences of the practice soon put it out of court, and the eternal cosmetics resumed their vogue.

The Persian woman has very fine hair; it is abundant and long, and generally jet black. But the fair Persian never hesitates to paint the lily; so, when she goes to the bath, she either dyes her hair with *vesmeh* to give it a blue tint, or with henna to make it auburn, or very often with both. But aureoline has no patronesses—the few women who are fair are ashamed of having golden hair, which is a feature not at all appreciated by their husbands. They, above all others, are devotees of dyeing. It is in the *hammam*, and there only, that the Persian woman ever has her hair washed or dressed; in the intervals between going to the *hammam* it is not touched. At the same time she takes the opportunity of dyeing with henna the palms and fingers of her nice little hands, and the toes and heels of her dainty feet.

Her coiffure is very characteristic. A parting in the middle of her forehead divides her front hair, which falls in stiff, pomaded locks about five inches long on both sides of her face, forming love-knots upon her cheeks. Sometimes her front hair is cut in a straight fringe over

her forehead ; her back hair is divided into innumerable little tight plaits, terminating in ribbons or sequins or tassels of pearls, which sweep the ground. As long hair is very much esteemed, the Persian women, like their enemies of antiquity, the Greeks, frequently lengthen their plaits with false hair, though they do not use horse-hair for this purpose.

The ordinary headgear of a Persian woman indoors is a tiny skull-cap worn on one side, and surmounted by a *jika*, which is a bent aigrette powdered with precious stones, or a sort of jewelled badge set with feathers of the peacock and other birds. The shape of this ornament commemorates and represents the sacred bent cypress of the ancient Zoroastrians. The same pattern constantly recurs in carpets and other fabrics, and particularly in the famous cashmere shawls which play such a conspicuous part in the dress of Persia.

Perhaps the reason why the Persian woman surrounds her face with the white cloud of gauze called *chargat* is that she may more exactly recall the circle of the moon at the fourteenth night. The *chargat* ought to frame the face in a circle as perfect as possible, showing the hair on the forehead like two raven's wings. It conceals the ears and binds the cheeks, letting the two love-knots escape. The ends of the veil meet under the chin, where they are caught together by a brooch, and hang down over the shoulder and throat. This gives the women of Persia the hieratic aspect of Egyptian divinities.

The graceful costume worn by Persian women of yore, which has made picturesque so many pages of the poets—consisting of the long tight jacket moulded in to the waist, and flowing pantaloons—underwent regrettable modifications in the last half of the nineteenth century. The greatest change took place when Nasr-ed-din returned in a wild state of excitement from his first journey to Europe, where the filmy skirts of the ballet-girls had produced a formidable effect upon his Oriental mind. In consequence, he bought a quantity of ballet-girl costumes, and on his arrival in Teheran had all his harem dressed like operatic fairies. One concession, however, he made—the ladies of the harem were allowed to retain their loose bodices, because they had never been disciplined to the use of the corset, which is unknown in Persia. The indoor costume of the Persian woman of to-day is therefore composed of a *pihvan*, a transparent veil of gauze or muslin, sequined, embroidered with gold or silver, and left quite open on the chest to show the chemise and bosom. The sleeves are full and long, buttoned close to the wrists, and turned back with revers richly ornamented with braid and knots. Instead of petticoats, the Persian woman wears two or three skirts, called *zirjournah*, one over the other; the lowest underskirt is made of very highly starched cotton, to create undulations and bouffants. The top skirt, of the same shape, is made of the material to match the bodice. The skirts have no waistband, but are tied on with cords so loosely that the skirt slips down and

shows the stomach ; both skirts are so short that even then they barely reach the knees. Latterly the best-dressed women in the Imperial harem have, on the advice of the very clever representative of Worth et Cie. in Teheran, taken to the silk tights worn by our ballet-girls.

Æsthetic Persians like the women in their harems to dress each one in a simple colour, but no two the same, so as to suggest to their poetical imaginations a vision of a garden of tulips.

The legs and feet of the harem women are left bare in the summer-time ; in winter they wear white socks and a kind of pantaloons to protect them from the cold. Their legs are often loaded with heavy anklets, mostly of gold and silver, called *khalkhal*. Tiny *pahpoosh*—i.e. Oriental slippers, which are made of velvet embroidered with gold or pearls, and are worn so short that the high heels come right under the middle of the feet—complete this indoor costume, which would shock a European lady ; but then the Persian lady is equally shocked by the décolleté of our women, which she considers the badge of impropriety. The more liberal-minded Persian men think it charming, but often inquire of their men friends at the Legations why they permit thin or old women to show their necks and arms. It is curious how the standard of modesty differs in various parts of the world. The attitude of the Venus of Medici in the Uffizzi at Florence would be unintelligible to the

Mussulman woman, whose first thought would be to cover her face.

The outdoor dress of the Persian woman consists of *shalvar*, *chader*, and a *rouhband*. The *shalvar* are wide black pantaloons, which are drawn in just above the ankles, and fit the feet like stockings; when the Persian women wear stockings at all, which is seldom, they are worn beneath the *shalvar*. The outdoor slippers are of red leather with iron heels, and their inconvenient shape may be due to the same cause as the compression of the women's feet in China—to prevent their owners from moving freely. The *chader* is a huge black opaque veil, which is thrown over the head and envelopes the whole body; even the hands are enveloped in it, because they must not be exposed. In spite of that, the rich wear gloves, generally made of green or mauve silk. The *rouhband* is a long and narrow white veil fastened with a clasp at the back of the head over the *chader*, and hangs over the face and forehead to the waist. In front of the eyes is a sort of thick lace, through which the eyes can see without being seen. This ungraceful costume, which transforms a woman into the black phantom of which I so often have to speak, conceals the form to such an extent that it allows the wife to meet her husband without being recognised. In spite of what writers have said about a woman in the Orient being obliged to be faithful to her husband, this costume sometimes enables her to deceive him. In Persia it is

not uncommon for ladies to put on the outdoor dress of their maids when they want to escape attention and do what they ought not to!

But the Persian lady is so accustomed to this costume that nothing would induce her to go out with her face uncovered. An Englishwoman would as soon enter the sea without her bathing dress. A well-born Persian woman regards with contempt the peasants and nomads who expose their faces.

No Persian would dare to touch a woman's veil, for this act would be met with ruthless severity; but if a woman, for a reason which it is easy to understand, cares to reveal her features to a passer-by, she pretends that her veil is slipping, and has an accident while she is putting it right.



The chader and rouhband (out-door dress of a Persian woman.)

CHAPTER XIII

THE AMUSEMENTS AND PUNISHMENTS OF THE *ENDEROUN*

ALTHOUGH Persian ladies excuse themselves from all kinds of labour, even the light tasks which form the pastime of European ladies, the middle and lower class Persian woman is very industrious. She not only attends to all the affairs of her household, and prepares the sweetmeats and conserves so appreciated all over the East, but also embroiders to perfection, weaves cloth and makes carpets.

Her amusements are limited, but she is not difficult to satisfy on that score, for she can be diverted by the merest trifles. She gossips as much as her European cousin, even more, and indulges in endless conversation. She smokes the *kalyan* as much as her husband, and, like him, takes a sensual pleasure in music, dancing, poetry, the singing of the nightingale, and the murmur of water. She adores flowers, and loves to adorn herself with them.

As she generally is unable to write, she is obliged to have recourse to the language of flowers, fruits, spices, and other domestic stores, to express her feelings. The *Kitab-Koulsoum-Naneh* gives the following list :—

1. A whole cardamom pod signifies—The patience and gentleness of the inamorata.

2. A seed of the cardamom signifies that there will be no trouble.

3. A cardamom half skinned signifies—"The door of patience is opened. I am consumed with love."

4. Cloves signify—"I am roasted" (*i.e.* with love).

There is a current expression in Persia which says, "You have turned my heart into roast meat," meaning, I am consumed with love.

5. A whole piece of cinnamon signifies—"I would sacrifice my life for thee."

6. Cinnamon in small pieces signifies—"I am sick with love, and require a physician."

7. A whole walnut signifies—"Be not grieved, for I belong to thee."

8. A walnut ground on one side signifies—"I have become weak with the pain (of love), and have rubbed this: do thou rub it likewise."

9. Sugarcane signifies—"Thou art sweet to me."

10. Chips of sandalwood signify—"Whenever I see thee I become water."

11. Grapes have their meaning expressed in the following verse:—

"The grapes of thy red lips may be named sugar-candy."

How many words may be uttered which come up to the meaning.

12. Saffron has its meaning versified thus:—

"Thou hast made me yellow like ground saffron.
How long shall I eat grief uselessly?"

13. A filbert signifies—"I am melancholy and sick."

14. A white almond, the skin of which has been peeled off, signifies—"The world knows that I love thee."

15. A piece of coral signifies—"May thy face become black," or, "A curse upon thee."

Instead of saying, "What have you been doing wrong?" a Persian asks, "What dirt have you been eating?"

Being very religious and superstitious, the Persian woman is much given to frequenting mosques and going on pilgrimages. She wears a great number of amulets, and is always ready to believe the wild stories the dervishes tell her to extort money.

Old age—and it begins early for her—is a calamity. Neglected by her husband, reduced almost to the rank of a servant, she finds compensation in the love of her sons, who generally remain faithful to her—a compensation well earned, for she has shown to them in their childhood a tenderness infinitely touching. They consult her in everything, and when she is a widow, or belongs to a bad husband, they receive her into their houses, and make her life as pleasant as possible. The poor old creature who has no son is often ill-treated. She tries to alleviate her fate by earning a small income in the little businesses which are compatible with her age—for example, that of the matrimonial go-between with whom we are familiar from the pages of the *Arabian Nights*.

One of the picturesque names that are given to her is *guison-sefid*, meaning white curl.

The old women are particularly fond of pilgrimages; they desire to assure their future lives. For, though the contrary is generally believed in Europe, the gates of the paradise of Mahomet are not shut to them.

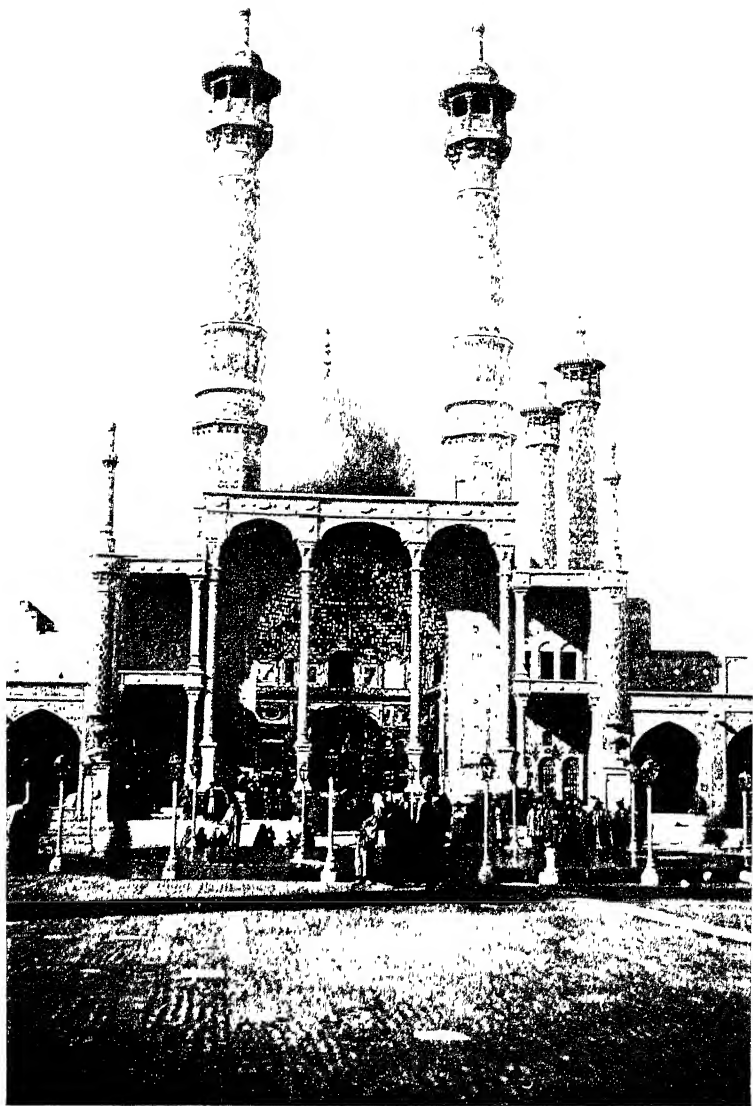
In a number of instances they do not return from these pilgrimages, the fatigues and privations which they endure resulting in their deaths. If they die when they have reached their goal they are buried in the sacred ground, and thus realise the wish of every fervid Mussulman.

It is curious that in the country of Sa'di, the author of the charming saying, "You must not strike a woman, even with a flower," it is no extraordinary thing for women to be beaten.

Mahomet said in the Koran—

"Men are superior to women because God has given them dominion over women, and because they endow them with their goods. Women must be obedient, and conceal the secrets of their husbands, to whose care they have been confided by Heaven. Husbands who suffer from their disobedience may punish them, banish them from their bed, *even beat them*. *Women must rely on submission to shelter them from ill-treatment*. God is good and sublime."

Every Mussulman is therefore in the right when he has recourse to this remedy to punish his wife. The Persians do not ignore the privilege, and consider that



The Mosque of Koum, the favourite pilgrimage for Persian women, who appear in front.

wives must sometimes be corrected like children. One need not add that it is only among the lower class that the practice is usual. In the educated class it is quite exceptional. But I remember a Persian maid saying to her mistress—an English spinster whom I knew, “You are not married; how happy you must be to have no one to beat you!”

It is very seldom nowadays that a woman is executed, whatever her crime may be, except when the Government wishes to make an example, as happened in the time of the persecution of the Babis. But sometimes a notorious case of infidelity obliges the governor of the town to take measures against the culprit. In Tabriz lately, a married woman who had been won by the rich presents of a merchant passing through, transmitted by a go-between, and had gone to the appointment, was denounced, and the governor, without consulting the husband, had the culprit seized, tied up in a sack, and clubbed to death.

The tower of the citadel of Tabriz is a standing warning against the commission of adultery, for it is from its top that women accused of that crime are thrown down.

Near Shiraz there is a well sunk in the rock which is used for the same purpose. It is called the Chah Ali-Bander; according to the Persians, it has no bottom.

The Arabs stone women taken in adultery. Mahomet imposed the same penalty—but ordered it to be exe-

cuted in secret, as everything appertaining to women must be.

“If one of your wives,” says the Koran, “has committed infidelity, call four witnesses. If their testimonies agree against her, lock her up in your house till death ends her career.”

If one were to keep to the directions of Mahomet, the infidelity would be rarely proved, for it is not easy to find four witnesses to an act which all culprits invariably conceal with the greatest care. If the husband has surprised them himself *de flagrante delicto*, he must take his oath, four times repeated, that he has seen it, and by a fifth oath take God as a witness of the truth of his testimony, adding that He may punish him if he has told a lie. But should the wife, after that, make four oaths, swearing her innocence, and calling upon herself in a fifth oath the Divine vengeance if her husband has not sworn falsely, the chastisement must be adjourned till new proofs or testimonies bring about a definite decision as to the truth.

Mahomet, in a more clement mood, condemned the adulteress to forty lashes of the whip and six months of exile. In the case of a slave, only half the penalty pronounced against the free woman is inflicted.

The punishment of the guilty man is not less severe, so powerful is the popular feeling against adultery.

It is related that a Khan, who had fallen madly in love with a married woman, relying on his social

superiority to the husband of the beloved, did not hesitate to send his men to carry her off. When the husband found it out, he gathered all his friends, and, joined by a few roughs, attacked the Khan's house, which was stormed and sacked; then, having captured the Khan, the raging crowd inflicted upon him all sorts of outrages—tore his beard out by the roots, blackened his face with charcoal, crowned him with a paper cap, and, having placed him on an ass barebacked, expelled him from the town, to which he dared not return.

Where the woman is at fault, no better example can be given than the horrible anecdote related by Dr. Wills :—

“One day in Kermanshah I was surprised to meet a procession in the street. First came all the *lutis* or buffoons, the public musicians singing and dancing; then a crowd of drunken roughs; then a few soldiers with fixed bayonets; then the ‘*farrash-bashi*,’ or ‘principal tent-pitcher’—in reality, the Imad-u-dowlet's head-man—on horseback; then the executioner, clad in red, and his aides; then two wretched women, their heads shaved and rubbed with curds, their faces bare and blackened, *dressed in men's clothes*, and both seated on one donkey, led by a negro, with their faces to the tail (their feet had been beaten to a pulp); then a crowd of some two thousand men, women, and children. On inquiry, I learnt that these women were attendants at a public bath, and had betrayed the wife of a tradesman into the hands of an admirer, who had secreted himself in

the bath with their connivance. The woman complained, the man fled, and justice (Persian justice) was being done on the two unfortunate women. The Imad-u-dowlet had severely bastinadoed them, and given them over to the executioner to be paraded through the town, and then banished—after they had been handed over to the tender mercies of all the ruffians of the city. The first part of the sentence had been carried out, and they had been led thus through the bazars from dawn till afternoon; the executioner taking, as is customary, a small tax from each trader according to his degree. Such is the Persian custom from old times. I learnt afterwards that the mob defiled these women, and one died of her injuries; the other poor wretch either took poison, or was given it by her offended relatives the next morning.”

The husband dispenses justice in his own home, and the authorities rarely interfere; he may even put a wife to death. For minor delinquencies he inflicts whatever punishments he thinks fit. Many horrors are committed behind the sacred walls of the *enderoun*, whose secrecy is respected to such an extent that nobody interferes, and the crimes remain unpunished. Poison is often administered; there is no law forbidding a chemist to sell poisons, and at the same time there is no official certificate of the cause of death when a person dies. The poisoner has therefore only to fear the family of his victim.

Women have been put to torture to make them

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confess where the money or treasure of their husbands is concealed. Also, in case of high treason, to render the punishment inflicted on the culprit more terrible, after beheading him and confiscating his property, his wives and daughters are given away as wives to the people of the lowest class. Being Asiatics, it is doubtful if they would not prefer the fate of the Hindoo widows burnt on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands.

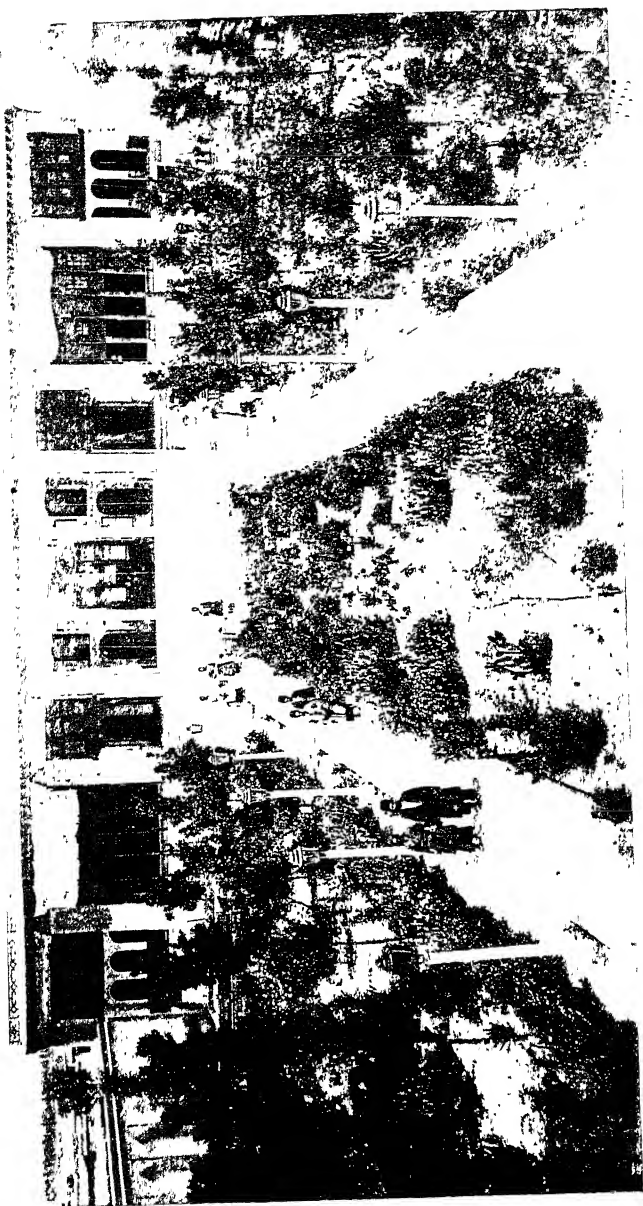
CHAPTER XIV

MARRIAGES AND TEMPORARY MARRIAGES

THERE are in Persia two kinds of marriages: the permanent marriage, if one may use the expression of a union so easily terminable by divorce; and the temporary marriage, which is peculiar to Persia, whose law and religion not only permit it but sanction it. It is absolutely forbidden and condemned among the Sunnite Mussulmans.

The Shara', or Book of the Sacred Law, in Persia contains several hundred paragraphs anticipating all the possibilities incidental to marriage. The first paragraph runs as follows:—

“Marriage constitutes a commendable act for two persons who cannot contain their carnal desires. Different opinions are advanced as to those whose will is strong enough to master their passion. But marriage has the general sanction of the Prophet, who said, ‘Marry and establish a family.’ ‘The worst amongst the dead are the celibates.’ ‘Second only to the benefit of having the Islamic faith is that of possessing a Mussulman wife, who rejoices a man’s eyes, obeys him, and during his absence



A rich Persian's house

watches faithfully over his home and his possessions.'

"Opposite opinions are founded on the celibacy of St. John the Baptist: those who profess it base on his example the proof of the superiority of celibacy to marriage. However, if we consider that this superiority is maintained by religions other than ours, and that in our canonical books no recommendation of the sort can be found, it must be admitted that marriage is a commendable act."

Relying upon this, the Persians think that parents cannot hurry too much to marry their children—they betroth them as early as possible, sometimes when they are three or four years old, especially in the high families and princely houses, where occasionally a daughter is betrothed from her birth.

The age of puberty is the age of marriage: in Persia it begins at from ten to twelve for a girl. Boys are less precocious, but it is not an uncommon thing to see a father of only seventeen years old.

It is the parents who arrange the marriages. The betrothed have generally not even seen each other before the wedding night, called *zefaf* (lifting of the veil), though in this respect the girl is more favoured, for she may have had more than one opportunity of seeing her future husband, who can be pointed out to her in the street; as for him, he must content himself (unless he makes his way secretly into the house of his betrothed to court her; or, better still, conceals

himself in the *enderoun* of his mother when she has invited his betrothed for the purpose) with the reports he receives from his mother or sister or some female relation or go-between. This go-between is a characteristic feature of the East; it is a regular profession, and a lucrative one for women of a certain age, since it requires much tact and diplomacy. In stories she is constantly interfering in love intrigues, where she is represented as an old harridan—*pirezal*.

Flirtation is consequently ignored, but the betrothed may love each other in imagination before the marriage: the parents have dwelt daily upon their mutual good qualities and perfections, an innocent artifice which paves the way for many illusions.

Putting it at its worst, the bride and bridegroom are always favourably disposed to each other, and the girl is happy to escape the yoke of her mother and become the mistress of a house herself. Such being the state of their minds on the wedding day, it is very rare for the husband to exercise his right of divorcing his wife if she prove to be ugly.

"He who desires to contract a marriage," says the Shara', "must seek a wife possessing these four qualifications: legitimate birth, virginity, purity, and chastity." One must not be contented with beauty and riches; it is forbidden only to consider these two things, which would be wise advice for other countries besides Persia. The difficulty is to get it accepted.

This is what the Koran ordains:—

“Do not marry the women who have been your father’s wives. It is a crime; it is the path of perdition. But if the wrong is committed, keep them.”

“You must not marry your mother, your daughter, your sister, your aunt, your niece, your foster-mother, your foster-sister, your grandmother, the daughters of your wives, of whom you are the guardian, unless you have not cohabited with the mother. You may not marry your daughter-in-law, nor two sisters. But if the crime is committed, the Lord is indulgent and merciful.”

“It is forbidden to you to marry free married women unless the fortunes of war have made them fall into your power. Such are the laws of the Lord; everything else is permitted to you. Enjoy your riches to procure chaste and virtuous wives. Avoid debauchery. Give those whose persons you have enjoyed the dowry appointed by the law. When you have done this, all the arrangements that you make together will be regular. God is wise and understanding.”

“He who is not rich enough to marry free Mussulman women should take for wives slaves belonging to the faith. Marry slaves only with the permission of their masters; give them equitable settlements. They must be chaste and free from impurity, and have no lovers. If after the marriage they give themselves up to debauchery, inflict on them half of the penalty which is prescribed for free women. This law is

established in favour of those who fear adultery. You should avoid these marriages; but the Lord is merciful and indulgent."

When the choice of the bride is settled for a man, his mother, or, if he has none, a female relation or a go-between, goes and says to the father and mother of the girl—

"*Mail-darem folan pesar-ra ber-lamy kabul fer-maiyd*—We have the desire, that so and so buy your slave you order you accept," *i.e.* "We wish to offer you such a young man as your slave; it is for you to signify your acceptance." The unconscious sarcasm of the wording of the proposal does not hinder the parents from accepting if they think fit. The suitor sends a shawl and a ring. The settlement is then discussed with the parents of the bride. It is the guarantee for her future in case of divorce or the death of her husband. Later on she will perhaps give it to her son, when he marries. It consists of a sum of money, which must not be less than ten *dirhams*—a mere matter of shillings—to which are added, according to the circumstances of the bridegroom, one or more slaves, gold in dust or ingots, little sacks of pearls or turquoises, and a copy of the Koran.

When everything is settled, the bridegroom gives to his betrothed's mother a sum of money for the *shirbaha*—the price of milk—and he sends the betrothed a present which consists of a number of trays of sweet-

meats and of coffers containing valuable articles like cashmere shawls, embroideries, and jewels. After this the day is fixed for the marriage, or rather the *Shirini-Khoran* (eating of sweetmeats), which we may call the contracting day, as the actual marriage takes place a few days later.

The date of a ceremony so important to the future happiness of the couple has naturally to be fixed by the astrologer. The following are occasions to be avoided—they are taken from the Book of the Law, the *Shara'*: "A marriage must not be consummated whilst the moon is in the sign of the Scorpion, nor during an eclipse of the moon, nor on the day of an eclipse of the sun, nor at noon-time, nor towards the end of twilight, nor on the three last days of the month *El-Mohak*, during which the moon is below the horizon, nor between dawn and sunrise, nor during the first night of each month except the month of *Ramadan*, nor during the night of the middle of the month, nor during a journey, a storm, or an earthquake."

On the day of *Shirini-Khoran* the bridegroom goes to the bride's house, preceded by a procession of *pish-khedmets*, carrying on their heads huge trays (*medjmehs*) loaded with sweetmeats, sugar-candy, sugar loaves, to sweeten the future, sherbets and fruits, all covered with cloths more or less valuable—often with cashmere shawls. All this for the most part is to make *teshekkous*

—to dazzle; and after having been paraded thus and exhibited at the house of the wedding, is sent back to the merchant from whom it was hired. This brilliant cortege makes a grand entry into the house of the bride, amid a buzz of music and admiring exclamations from the numerous guests. As usual, the women are in the *enderoun*, and the men in the *biroun*.

Instead of going to the mosque, the mosque comes to them.

The *Mollahs*, followed by the bridegroom, his father, his witnesses, and friends, proceed to the *enderoun*, which has previously been divided in two by a curtain, near which they stand. Behind it, quite close, are seated the bride and her mother, surrounded by female relations and friends, all veiled.

The witnesses must be two men or one man and two women. They must be free, adult, of sound mind, and Mohammedans by religion.

After it has been ascertained that there has been no substitution of persons, the principal *Mollah* formally asks the bride if she will have this man to be her husband, and *vice versâ*. If the question remains unanswered, the *Mollah* repeats it up to three times; if she does not answer at all, her silence is interpreted as consent. The same question is then put to the man.

The *Mollah* then pronounces the marriage formula in Arabic, and writes out the marriage contract, in which the amount of the settlement is stipulated. The witnesses sign it, and it is handed to the bride, who keeps it care-

fully. Then the happy couple are congratulated, on opposite sides of the curtain, and the men retire to the *biroun* except the bridegroom, who, the curtain being withdrawn, is congratulated by all the women, to each of whom he gives a little souvenir, generally *ashrefy*—pieces of gold worth one toman, if the family be rich. Then he eats with his bride, always veiled, some *shirini*, in order that their joint life may be “sweet and sugared.”

After this the bridegroom retires to his male friends. This is the signal for rejoicing; male musicians and dancers in the *biroun*, and female musicians and dancers in the *enderoun*, exert themselves furiously. The guests will gorge sweetmeats and tea and smoke *kalyans* till far into the night; then the supper is served, and they separate, making an appointment for the second part of the wedding ceremony, which takes place a few days later.

This is celebrated at the bridegroom's house—or rather the husband's; for the marriage is reckoned from the day that the contract is signed. It lasts several days, according to the wealth of the parties. During its continuance the guests are banqueted and amused all day and through the best part of the night.

On the last day, the husband, accompanied by musicians and dancers and his most intimate friends, goes to the *hammam*. An elaborate toilet is gone through, in which the depilatory paste and the razor succeed each other, interspersed with music, collations, tea, and

kalyans, those eternal accompaniments to every Persian rejoicing.

His wife sends him a complete suit from hat to boots, with a ring and a little satchel of some valuable material, filled with a pinch of sacred earth from Kerbela or Mecca, on which he will lay his forehead when he bows in prayer. With these she sends little skull-caps of cashmer to be worn under the *kolah*, for each of his friends. The husband bestows on the bearer a present of money and all the clothes in which he entered the *hammam*. In the evening the mother arrives, bringing the bride to the husband's home. They come on horseback or in a carriage covered with a shawl. The procession is headed by musicians, a cortège of friends follows, and the bearers of the wife's trousseau and presents follow between two rows of *fanous*, huge white lanterns.

When it arrives at the gate of the house, the cortège stops; guns are fired; rockets are set up; and at the moment when the wife crosses the threshold, one or several lambs and young camels have their heads cut off and thrown on the other side, so that she has to step over the blood—which brings good luck. The sacrificed animals are partly eaten by the guests and partly given to the poor.

The husband takes his wife to the *enderoun*, where all the female guests are gathered to congratulate her, and the festivities begin again, and are kept up to a late hour, when the husband goes to the nuptial chamber to wait for his wife, who is conducted to him by her mother.

Alone at last, the husband gives her the present of the *zefaf* (the lifting of the veil), a mirror and a jewel ; then she turns her back to him and holds the mirror in front of her face, in order that it may be over her shoulder that her husband catches his first vision of her beauty.

There is no other feature about the wedding except that it generally ruins the bridegroom. Love of display often leads the Persian to spend in a few days, less his fellow-citizens, the money that he has taken years to amass.

The temporary marriage is a time-honoured Persian institution, if one can judge by the legend, which says that *Rustem*, the Hercules of Persia, contracted such a union during a hunting excursion with *Tamineh*, the daughter of the King of Samengan, of which a son, the celebrated *Zohrab*, was born.

It existed also among the Arabs, before and during Mahomet's lifetime ; and it was only under the Caliphate of Omar that it was abolished. From this is derived its prohibition in the Sunnite Mohammedan countries.

The Koran and the Hadith, or Book of Traditions, do not mention it, and the Persians have concluded, therefore, that the Prophet permitted it. They cite in confirmation of this the tradition by which Mahomet passed over such unions among his soldiers during his campaigns.

The Persian law and their religion not only allow it but sanction it, pretending that it has been established to avoid the plague of prostitution.

It is the women of the lower class, called *Sighehs*, or more exactly *Mouti*, who devote themselves to it. Their patrons are travellers, or those who fear the monotony of a prolonged union, or simply those whose wives are ill, and also those betrothed to girls not yet of a marriageable age, who have several years to wait before they can marry.

When his choice is made, the would-be husband sends his *Vekil*, or trustee, to come to an arrangement with the *Mouti's Vekil*. When they are agreed on the dowry that the man is to give to the woman, they have recourse to the Mollah.

According to the law, four conditions are requisite for the validity of this marriage :—

First, the contract, which must be made by a man of law or a *Mollah*.

Secondly, that the woman should belong to one of the four revealed religions : Islamism, Judaism, Christianity, or Zoroastrianism. In case a man has been deceived and has married a woman belonging to none of these religions, he must be careful that during the time of their union she does not drink wine, and does not eat any of the elements considered unclean. There are some minor conditions which go with this.

Thirdly, the dowry, which may be more disrespectfully spoken of as the "rent." This is the most important feature. It must be of a nature which can be weighed or measured—anything from gold dust to corn—and whatever amount the *Mouti* will accept. It must be

described in detail in the contract. The man can dissolve it, but in this case he must pay half the dowry to the woman, if they have been living together less than the half of the agreed time; if this period is exceeded, the dowry must be paid in full when they part.

Fourthly, the definition of the term of marriage, which can be from a fraction of a day to ninety-nine years. When the fixed period is over, the parties may renew it if they choose. The woman cannot re-marry before the expiration of a lunar month, this lapse of time ensuring that she is not *enceinte*. If that be the case, she must wait four months and ten days. The parties cannot divorce or inherit from each other.

When the contract is made, the *Mouti's Vekil* addressing the man's *Vekil*, says, "Do you agree to give me your soul according to the conditions made?" If the reply is in the affirmative, the seals of the *Mollah* and the two *Vekils* are impressed on the contract, which is handed to the "lady," and the ceremony is over.

Though the law makes no provision for the children, they are generally acknowledged by the father, who provides for their maintenance until they can support themselves.

As the law forbids divorce to those who marry temporarily, it happens sometimes that women of a better social position have recourse to this marriage in order to ensure the permanence of their union.

It is useless to speak of the deplorable effects which result from these marriages. One can cite as an

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example what happens in the provinces of Ghilan and Mazanderan, where every year at the time of the rice harvest the peasants marry temporarily such women as they judge necessary to help them in their work, and when the winter comes and the contract expires, abandon them, and may or may not marry the same wives next year.

CHAPTER XV

DIVORCE

DIVORCE is obtained in Persia most easily. However, it is common only among the lower classes. The men of the upper classes have recourse to it rarely, because of the scandal attached to it, and because they do not like a woman who has penetrated the intimacy of their life to divulge its secrets.

According to the *Shara'*, it must be pronounced by the husband in the presence of two witnesses. The Arabic formula is the only valid one. It can be expressed in three ways: "*Enti talekoun*, Thou divorced," "*Folanet talekoun*, Such a one is divorced," or "*Hazi talekoun*, This one is divorced." It must be expressed distinctly and spoken, for if written it has no value unless it is necessitated by dumbness. When the formula has been pronounced, the woman must cover herself with a veil, retire to her apartment, and not allow herself to be seen for a lunar month. If he has only one wife, the husband has no need to mention her name. If he has several, it is important that he should pronounce it in the formula, for if he does not, it is only by drawing lots that the woman who is to be divorced can be designated. The

divorce cannot be pronounced by a husband under ten years of age or of unsound mind.

It depends, therefore, entirely on the will of the husband, who, under the pretext that the wife is bad-tempered, barren, extravagant, excessively lean, invalid, or blind, can repudiate her. Adultery does not enter this category, because death settles that.

There are reasons for repudiation even more remarkable in our eyes. The man who, being already married, is ambitious of having a princess as his wife, must have recourse to divorce to get rid of his existing wives: this is the only case where polygamy is forbidden. Occasionally a new and very much loved wife will demand that those who are already in the *enderoun* should be repudiated.

The only drawback for the husband is that he must pay the dowry if the action is his. For this reason husbands are to be found, who, in order to avoid this nuisance, ill-treat and beat their wives till they themselves move for divorce—since in that case there is no necessity to pay anything.

On her side, the woman who wants to divorce her husband without losing her dowry, can, if she is dealing with a weak husband, have recourse to the same means, and make his life insupportable in order to force him to repudiate her.

When she wants to obtain a divorce, the woman goes to the *Mollah*, and shows the sole of her slipper.

As always in Mussulman countries, the law favours the husband.

If it is in a passion that he repudiates his wife, the divorce is effective only when he has pronounced it three times.

If after having signified his desire to divorce her, he changes his mind, the divorce is annulled. But when he has done it three times he has no longer the power to take back his wife, unless she has married somebody else, and is freed by his divorce or death. In the case of a slave, a time and a half is sufficient, as they are liable to only half of the punishments inflicted on free women. To avoid the difficulty of determining what once and a half means, the doctors of the law have made once and a half count as twice.

As Heaven is always open to making arrangements, the husband has a loophole for taking back the wife who has been three times repudiated. The law having fixed as a minimum term for this union one night, which must be spent in the house of the husband, recourse is made to accommodating men who for the sake of a sum of money marry the "lady" in question and undertake to repudiate her on the next morning.

The stories they tell in Persia to illustrate the workings of the law are some of them very amusing. The best, perhaps, is that of the ill-tempered old merchant of Nishapur, who, in a fit of passion, divorced a beautiful and highly connected young wife for the third time. She went back to her father's house, and

tried her best to win her family over to her side. But it was in vain—not only had her old ruffian of a husband won their consent to her marriage by the largeness of the dowry he had offered, but he had been in the habit of giving them handsome presents ever since.

The only friend she had in the house was her old nurse, who for reasons of her own was very anxious that she should marry a man called Omar, a Turkoman of great personal beauty and high birth, who was brother to the favourite wife of the governor of the town, but very poor, because he had offended his father.

The nurse desired to find a rich and beautiful wife for Omar, but knew that the parents of the old merchant's divorced wife would never consent to her marriage with a poor Turkoman; so she was in despair as to how she should carry out her purpose, until the merchant himself put the game into her hands.

As soon as his fury had worn off, he fell into a passion of regret at having lost such a charming and beautiful wife, but as he had pronounced the decree of divorce three times, he could only get her back by her marrying again and losing her new husband by death or divorce.

There was no reason why this should present any great difficulty or delay, because in Persia it is not difficult to find a man of sufficiently good appearance and position who is so badly off as to be willing, for the sake of a hundred tomans, to marry the woman under an oath to divorce her after the shortest possible period



Persian dancers, from ancient pictures.

[Collection of the Author.]

of marriage, which is one day. This is no sinecure, for the Persians have such a genius for derision, that to do such an undignified thing is to lay yourself open to ridicule for the rest of your life.

Then the intrigue began: the nurse sang the charms of Omar to the girl. Omar's sister, the governor's favourite wife, who had seen the girl at the baths, inflamed his passion with descriptions of her beauty and his mind with the amount of her dowry.

The pair were deeply in love with each other before ever their eyes met.

The next thing to do was to contrive that the choice of a temporary husband made by the old merchant's agent should fall on Omar.

Omar showed all the Oriental's subtle power of intrigue in placing himself incidentally in the path of the agent, and in inspiring him with the requisite idea that he was a man of high family and in desperate circumstances owing to his inflexible adherence to his word.

The agent approached Omar. Omar repulsed him, saying that whether he was poor or not could not be of the slightest consequence to the agent.

The latter, imagining that he had found exactly the right man for the affair, at once began on his side to intrigue to secure him, and was at length successful.

The understanding was that Omar should receive one hundred tomans if he would marry the girl and on the next morning divorce her.

The old merchant chose a very lonely house in the outskirts of the city for the wedding night of his wife and Omar, because he wished everything to be done as secretly as possible.

The marriage duly took place, and on the following morning the merchant went to claim the fulfilment of the bargain. But when he arrived there he was met by two savage Turkoman warriors, who made him hold their horses, and by and by twenty more of them rode up, headed by their chief.

It soon appeared that Omar and his lovely young bride had not the least intention of seeking for a divorce ; that they had only married in this way to overcome the opposition of the bride's family. But anticipating that the merchant would use every means in his power to compel the fulfilment of the bargain, Omar had sent word to his father, the Turkoman chief, that he had secured a rich and beautiful wife, and should need his aid in carrying her off. The father promptly received Omar back into his favour, and rode with a score of tribesmen to help him. The fact that the place chosen by the merchant to keep things secret was so lonely and out of the way made this very easy.

Presently Omar and his bride came out, and were escorted to the mountains by the Turkomans, who left two of their number with the merchant to prevent him giving the alarm till they had a sufficient start.

The merchant lodged a complaint with the governor, but was put off on one excuse after another : now the

governor was ill, now he had gone away on a hunting expedition. At length the merchant remembered that the governor's favourite wife was the sister of Omar, and then he went about his business, a sadder and a wiser man.

CHAPTER XVI

POLYGAMY

POLYGAMY is less general in Persia than one would believe. We found our ideas of Oriental harems upon the exceptions, of which we naturally hear most. For example, as we are told that Nasr-ed-din left fifteen hundred widows, we cannot imagine the smallest harem without a profusion of women. The harem, properly speaking, is a luxury; and just as there are men in Europe who have no motor car, so there are men in Persia who have no harem. The harem of Nasr-ed-din was so extensive because he never missed an opportunity of augmenting it. This dashing sovereign often recruited young women on his hunting and shooting expeditions. He had a marked predilection for young peasant girls, and when he was passing a village would sometimes send his eunuchs into it to order the male population to disappear, and the female population to dress in their best and draw up in two lines in the principal street for His Majesty to inspect them.

As Shah he had the power of life or death over all his subjects, and was also legally lord and master of all their women, married or not.

When everything was ready, he came, escorted by his eunuchs, and passed, often remaining on horseback, with as much seriousness as if it was a military review, between the two lines of provoking and languishing looks and smiles. For if the ideal of every male Persian is to become Grand Vizier, every Persian woman cherishes the hope of becoming a wife of the Shah. Her family shares her hope, for showers of presents and favours rain upon the relatives of the Lord's Elect. When Nasr-ed-din chose a girl, he had her sent straight to Teheran, where she received lessons in etiquette, deportment, and sometimes in dancing. If it was discovered that an unmarried woman was no longer a virgin before she was presented to the Shah, she was returned, if she was not poisoned.

Her sisters often accompanied her to the Royal harem, intoxicated with visions of luxury, gaiety, and wealth. When the Shah chose a married woman, the husband found that it was much to his interest: the more or less sumptuous presents indemnified him for the loss of his wife, and he lost no time in finding a substitute—or several; for the mere fact of having had in his possession a wife who had attracted the Royal notice proved that he brought luck to those connected with him. This, added to the weight of the Royal presents, turned the balance heavily in his favour in the matrimonial market.

These women whom the Shah brought back from his expeditions seldom achieved the position of legitimate

wives, except in the rare instances of their becoming mothers, when they had a right to the title in every respect. But they and their suites contributed to increase the population of the harem, from which the veterans were never discharged.

There were also the women sent as presents to His Majesty. The governors of the provinces sent, as they still send, beautiful maidens amongst the New Year's offerings, and in the exchange of presents between Oriental sovereigns, if horses are always to be found, it is no less true that there are always young girls and young boys. This custom has always existed in the East. We find it in a letter addressed by the Governor of Egypt to Mahomet himself:—

“I have read the letter in which you invite me to embrace Islamism. This departure deserves reflection. I knew that another prophet would arise (after Jesus), but I imagined that he would appear in Syria. In any case, I have received your envoy with high honours. *He will present you on my behalf two young Copt maidens of noble extraction.* I have added to this present a white mule, a silver-grey riding ass, garments of Egyptian linen, choice honey, and butter” (*Ahmed-ben-Joseph*).

After each of his visits to Constantinople the Shah brought back young beauties presented by the Sultan. And in the good old times when the Caucasus, the country of beautiful women, was a Persian province,

the governor never missed sending every year to his sovereign a vast number of young Georgian and Circassian slaves of both sexes, who, distributed among the grandees of the kingdom, have certainly exercised a great influence in making the race so beautiful.

All these, added to the political wives, the slaves, and the servants, made the Royal harem a regular barrack. So there is, then, nothing extraordinary in Nasr-ed-din leaving fifteen hundred widows at his death.

The Shah's widows, apart from the principal wives who had their fortunes made, and became Imperial widows, were generally dismissed by his successor, and found husbands among the small merchants and tradesmen of Teheran. These were proud to take women who had had the distinction of belonging to the Royal household; for even if the wives were not very fascinating, they still had the halo of Royal favour, . . . and some jewels and a little money.

The grandfather of Nasr-ed-din, Feth Ali Shah the Magnificent, had a harem far more considerable. It is said that when he died there were one thousand of his descendants, . . . and the founder of the dynasty was a eunuch!

But it is not from the Royal harem that one must derive one's ideas of polygamy in Persia. Mahomet allowed four legitimate wives to the ordinary believer; the caliphs and the sovereign, of course, are above that. Mahomet himself had nine wives, without counting the

"slaves of the right hand" taken in the wars against the infidels.

To some of his followers who remarked on it he answered as is found in the Koran : "Do not desire to be equal to him whom God has raised above you." The portion of everyone will be the fruit of his labours. Ask the mercy of the Lord. He has the knowledge of all things!" (Soura iv. Women, ver. 36).

And the Koran, chap. xxxiii. (the Conspirators), ver. 49, says : "O Prophet, it is permitted to thee to marry the women that thou hast dowered, the captives that God has made fall into thy hands, the daughters of thy uncles and of thy aunts, who have fled with thee, and every faithful woman who may give her heart to thee. It is a privilege that we accord to thee."

And ver. 50 : "We know the laws of marriage that we have established for the faithful. Do not fear that thou wilt transgress in using thy rights. God is indulgent and merciful."

Nearly all the Prophet's wives were political ; there was only one virgin, the daughter of Abou-Bekr. It is from this that the name of her father came : *Abou-Bekr* means the father of the virgin. To his four legitimate wives a man is allowed to add as many concubines as he can support, but he is ordered not to forget their comfort. To show an example, Mahomet had a separate house for each of his wives, in which she had her own servants ; and he made an attempt, in spite of the predilection he had for Ayesha, not to show favour to one more than to



A famous pilgrimage shrine near Teheran—the tomb of Shah Abd-oul-Azim, surrounded by Mollahs and Seyyeds

another, not to visit one more than another, so as not to make them jealous. However, he says in the Koran : "You will not, in spite of your efforts, be able to love your wives equally ; but you must keep the balance even between them " (Soura iv. ver. 128).

The Persian in general is contented with one legitimate wife. If he tried to have several, the troubles which would befall his home would very soon drive him to the divorce court, and bring him back to monogamy. For every legitimate wife desires to be the mistress of the house ; and unless the birth or fortune of one puts her in a situation so superior to the others as to compel them to bow to her will, the wives will quarrel to such a degree, and make each other so miserable, that the poor husband will suffer. It is, in fact, very rare for several wives of equal position to live in harmony. When they hate each other—and God knows what excellent reasons they have for that—they are driven to expedients of which poison is not the worst : nor is poisoning uncommon.

The sensible Persian contents himself with the wife who has been chosen for him by his parents, and when he thinks proper he relieves the monotony of his *enderoun* by the purchase of a beautiful young slave. This personage, as she remains a slave, does not affect the position of the legitimate wife, whom she is bound to obey. However, jealousy may none the less drive the wife to hate the slave if she is too young and beautiful, and this poor creature will find only a very thin

shield in the love of her master against the poisoned darts of the neglected wife. The latter will inflict a variety of torments on her. The lack of education in the Persian woman keeps her at such a very low level of mentality, that she will not reject the most ignoble means in her attempts to overthrow and dethrone her rival; and if she still has a little authority over her husband, either in virtue of her fortune or of her family, she will take the opportunity of inflicting some corporal punishment even for the slightest fault.

The prospect of such a home would encourage the Persian to remain a bachelor if, for one thing, the fact of being a bachelor were not in bad odour; and for another, he were not confident in the superiority of the rights conferred on his sex proving sufficient to enforce peace in his home. As with us, this depends much upon his energy. For when the wife sees the opportunity of acquiring absolute power, she makes a point of overdoing it. Stories about shrews are very popular; there is something farcical or mythological about most Persian stories. The following is a fair example of them:—

A man had a wife who was the plague of his life. At last he could bear it no longer, and threw her down a well, determined, no matter what should happen, to abandon her to her fate. But three days later he relented, and let a rope down the well for her to come up by if she was still alive. Instead of her a huge dragon came up. The man was terribly frightened; he felt sure that

the dragon would devour him ; but instead of devouring him, it overwhelmed him with gratitude and promises of favours for having delivered it from the society of such a terrible companion. As the reward for leaving his wife in the well, the dragon entered into a conspiracy with him. It arranged to go and coil itself round the body of the king's daughter. Then, after the astrologers and magicians had used all their skill in vain in the attempt to deliver her, the man was to come to the king, and say, "Sire, I am the only person who can save your daughter ; if I do not succeed, you may kill me."

The dragon would recognise him and release her, and the king would of course recompense the saviour of his daughter with splendid presents. The dragon made it a stipulation that if he seized any other princess the man was not to interfere, on penalty of death.

The plot was duly put into execution. The dragon went and coiled himself round the daughter of the Shah, and after every remedy had been tried without success, the man came and presented himself before the Shah, saying, "Sire, I am the only person who can save your daughter ; if I do not succeed, you may kill me."

Then the dragon knew him, and went away, leaving the princess free ; and the king bestowed her upon her deliverer, and gave him an enormous fortune.

After a time the dragon went and coiled itself round the body of a princess of Franghistan. The King of

Franghistan, who had heard of the marvellous rescue of the Shah's daughter, sent an embassy loaded with costly presents to the Court of Persia, praying her rescuer to come and free his daughter also. But the man remembered what he had promised the dragon, and was afraid to go.

His Royal father-in-law naturally did not understand the reason, and was furious, and insisted that he should go.

At last the man had to go, but he was in terror what would happen to him for breaking his contract with the dragon. So his journey was very gloomy, and he was shaken with nervousness until at the last moment an idea came to him.

When he arrived in the presence of the dragon and the princess, he said to the dragon, "I have not broken my word. I did not come to deliver the princess, but only to tell you that my wife has succeeded in getting out of the well, and is coming to avenge herself upon you as quickly as she can."

The dragon, remembering the terrible time he had had with her, flew away, for he knew the proverb that it is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a querulous and angry woman.

Here is another bazar story :—

In Persia a wealthy or powerful man always has hangers-on, who are not servants, and do not receive any pay, but live in his shadow, eat his food, ride his horses, sometimes even wear his old clothes, and above



Joseph entering Zuleikha's harem.

[Collection of the Author]

Photo by P. Bataille.]

all enjoy his protection. They are his "men." In return they render all sorts of services when they get a chance, and of course make his retinue look more important. Abd-Oullah was such a friend to Ali-Khan, a very wealthy and influential merchant of Ispahan, who was so delighted with his charm and cleverness, and so pleased with his services, that he thought he would make a very good son-in-law, and suggested him as such to his beautiful daughter. She was very overbearing and bad-tempered, and thinking that he was rather nice-looking and that she would have a pull over him with her money, agreed to it. So they were married. Soon his friends came to congratulate him, amongst them Houssein, who was known to have a very overbearing and bad-tempered wife. He said, "I congratulate you on your marriage." Abd-Allah replied, "I am so pleased that my happiness gives so much gratification to my friends." Houssein was astonished, and continued, "Are you really happy with a woman who is known to have such a bad temper?" "I assure you that she is perfectly charming, and that I am perfectly happy." "May I ask how you manage it?" "Certainly. On the night of my marriage I went into her apartments in uniform with my sword on. She did not take any notice of me, but put on a supercilious air and made a parade of stroking her cat. I quietly picked up the cat and cut off his head with my sword; took the head in one hand, the body in the other, and threw them out of the window. My bride was amazed, but she did not show it; and after a few seconds

she broke into a smile, and has been a most submissive and charming wife ever since." Houssein went straight home, and as soon as it was night-time put on his uniform and went into the harem. The domestic pet came to greet him ; he seized it with the hand that was accustomed to caress it, drew his sword, and with a single blow decapitated it. At the same moment he received a blow in the face, and before he had recovered from his astonishment a second and a third, and between the blows his wife hissed out, "I can see to whom you have been speaking—but you are too late ; it was on the first night that you ought to have done this."

The husband of a princess of the Imperial tribe cannot have any other wife. He is under her absolute control, and must submit to her wishes.

If she is not faithful to him, he can only recognise the fact and keep his complaints to himself.

Polygamy is more ordinary in the country districts, where women help their husbands in their work.

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There are very few instances of European women having married Persians, but a Swiss governess of the children of an ex-Secretary of the Persian Legation in Vienna married him when they came to Teheran, and she lives like a Persian woman in the *enderoun*, and goes out in the "black phantom" dress worn by the Mussulman women. She is not happy. A Frenchwoman is also said to have tried the harem life, and to have been so well satisfied with it that she

refused to leave it when her parents came to take her away.

The most curious story in this connection is that of Kitty Greenfield, the daughter of an ex-British resident who died in Persia, where he had property. Kitty fell in love with the wild beauty of a Kurdish chief, and as her mother, an Armenian, with whom she lived near Sauj-Boulak, on the estate left by her father, very astutely opposed the match, which appeared to her monstrous, Kitty was abducted by her lover on horseback. Pretty, seventeen years old, and rich, she was a prize for the Kurdish chief, who took her to his house in Sauj-Boulak, where the marriage was celebrated. In order to belong more entirely to her ravisher, she became a Mussulman. Her mother in despair had recourse to the English Legation, who referred the complaint to the Shah. Orders were immediately given to compel the Kurdish chief to give up the young woman, and to take her away by force in case he refused. The Kurd called the whole tribe to his aid, and made an armed resistance to the authorities of the province. The Shah was furious, and ordered troops to be sent, which blockaded Sauj-Boulak, and it was only after a serious action, in which the Kurds were surrounded, that they decided to give up Kitty, who was put in a place of security to await the orders of the Shah. A few days afterwards His Majesty ordered her to be freed, and, to the amazement and horror of all Europeans, she declared her wish to go back to her husband ; and as, according to the Mussulman law known

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as the Jedid-oul-Islam, every Christian converted to Mohammedanism has the right to claim all the properties of the family, the Kurdish chief had recourse to the law and the property in which the mother of Kitty had a life interest would have been taken from her if the attempt had not been frustrated by the British Legation.

The fate of Kitty is not known.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SHAH'S HAREM

WITH the exception of the Shah and the eunuchs, no men but a few doctors are permitted to enter that sanctuary the harem of the Shah—harem being an Arab word which means sacred. A medical man, who shall be called Solyman to preserve his incognito, lifted for me the corner of the jealous veil which envelopes this feminine city. He first secured his footing in the *enderoun* in this manner. The secluded life and the lack of education make the women of the *enderoun* very difficult patients. Dr. Solyman complains bitterly of their childish naïveté and superstition, which obliged him to depend more on diplomatic talent than medical science.

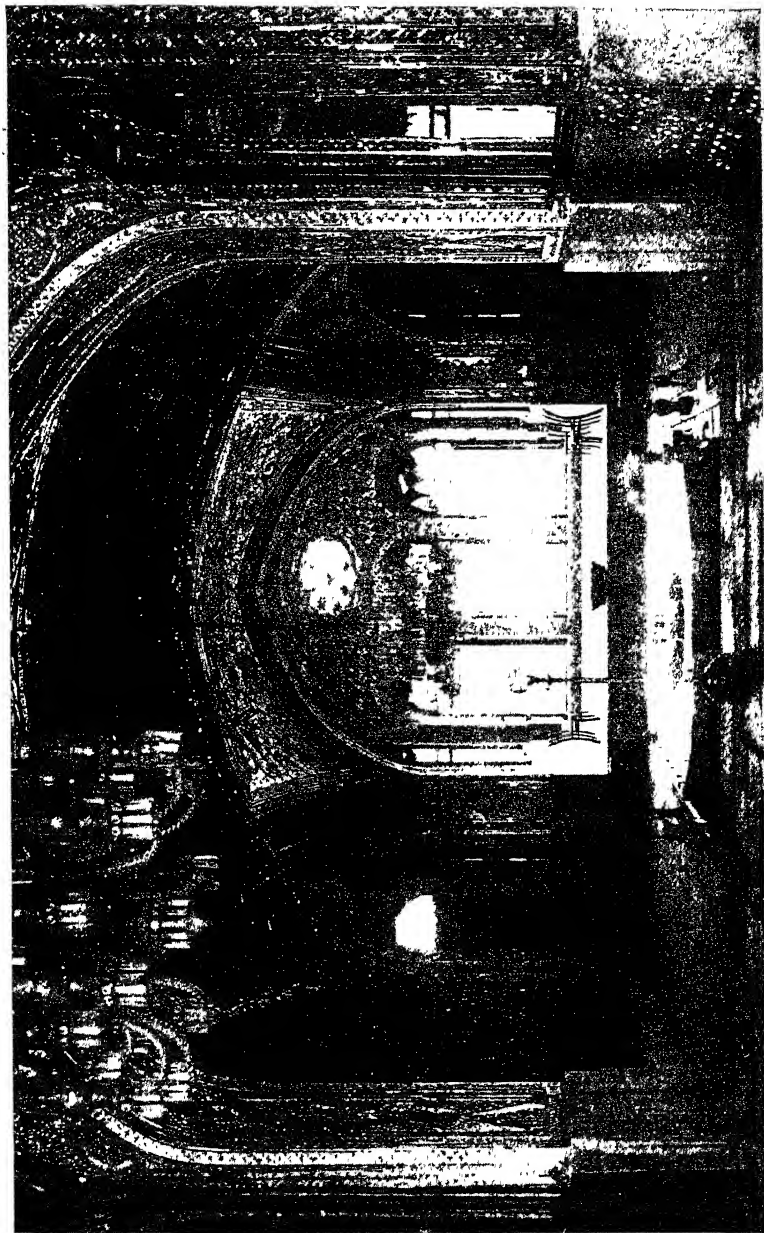
When he came back from London, where he had spent some years at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, he was appointed one of the doctors of the harem of His Majesty. His début was difficult, for the other Persian doctors, jealous of his science, and fearing to see him grow at their expense, leagued against him. They criticised his prescriptions, and advised the patients not to take the medicines prepared by a man who had remained so long in contact with unclean Christians that he was impreg-

nated with their impurity; and, further, his prescriptions were declared to be contrary to all the principles laid down by the "kings of medicine," Lokman, Galen, and Avicenna. Had he not ordered a patient suffering from fever to give up his iced drinks for a hot potion, which is the surest way to increase fever, since Mahomet himself has said that fever is the fire of hell, and that it must be combated with cold water? The Prophet, when he was attacked by a violent fever, used to call his wives to throw cold water over his head.

Dr. Solyman, in spite of his appointment as official doctor of the harem, was not consulted by any of the Imperial wives. Only servants and slaves had recourse to his services.

However, on a hot spring afternoon, when he was retained to attend a slave of the Favourite, whose grave state necessitated his constant presence, someone came to tell him that the princess, who was having her siesta, had started out of her sleep screaming, being a prey to terrible pains. As there was no other doctor within call, he was asked to come and attend her.

The Favourite was in the *zirzamin*, the underground chamber with a low vaulted ceiling, paved with white marble, and with richly tiled walls, which is the favourite refuge of the Persian in summer. Sunk in the centre was a fountain with a jet of water which distributed a refreshing coolness. A crowd of women surrounded the princess. She was lying on a thin mattress spread on the marble in one of the arched recesses, between the two



Zirzamin—underground hall used in summer

doorways, facing each other to create a continual draught. These are the characteristics of the *zirzamin*.

On the arrival of Dr. Solyman, the women drew their veils over their faces, and the eunuch rushed to the gate and stopped him while a curtain was erected in front of the recess to allow the doctor to approach the princess without seeing her. When the doctor was at her side, he could at first only elicit moans in reply to his questions ; but the patient being pressed at last gave him to understand, in sentences broken by lamentations, that after her lunch she had fallen asleep as usual, and that she had seen herself, in her sleep, surrounded by bad djinns, who had pierced her chest with invisible darts, which gave her horrible pains. Upon that, to the astonishment of the people present, Dr. Solyman turned to the eunuch and asked, without paying any attention to the djinns, what the princess had eaten for lunch. When he learned that her *ménu* consisted of iced *mast-khyar* (cucumber and curds), he understood that nothing was the matter except indigestion. However, being a conventional man, he wanted to draw an exact diagnosis of the case. She consented to let him feel her pulse, and an arm emerged from the curtain. He felt the pulse, but when he desired to see the tongue he had to enter on a lengthy parley before the curtain opened far enough to let the princess, closely veiled, show him the tip of her tongue. Dr. Solyman wrote his prescription, and the mother of the princess, a very superstitious person, performed the *Estekhareh*, seized her beads at a chance place, and then

began to tell them off to the end, as we count cherry stones on a plate. The result was favourable: the prescription could be taken. But at the same moment the regular doctor of the princess, who had been sent for, arrived. Everybody turned from Dr. Solyman and his prescription, as if he had never been there.

When the regular doctor had prescribed in his turn, the *Estekhareh* was performed again, and this time the result was unfavourable. Heaven had declared itself; Dr. Solyman triumphed. His prescription produced such a good and prompt effect that the delighted princess would not have any other doctor from that day forward.

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Let us now enter the *Porte des Voluptés* with Dr. Solyman. It is in the orangery. Is this by the irony of fortune or by the symbolic will of the sovereign, who wishes to surround the gate of his harem by the emblem of virginity? The massive gate, adorned with golden locks and bolts, was formerly guarded by two gigantic deaf and dumb negroes, always ready to fell with their clubs of silver with gold spikes any rash man who sought to gather the golden apples of these Eastern Hesperides. To-day, fear of the death penalty which would instantly be inflicted on the trespasser has taken the place of the negroes, and their clubs have been coined into money.

Once through the gate you are in a courtyard surrounded by the quarters of the eunuchs. There are about forty in the Imperial harem, and here only are they numerous, for you seldom find eunuchs in the harems of

Persia except those of grantees. The eunuch is a luxury ; he is very expensive to buy. The most esteemed are the tall bronzed Abyssinian and the black of the Soudan. A thousand pounds or more is paid for one. Pale or white eunuchs bought in the Persian or Turkish markets are less valuable. They are always beardless, and generally ugly—sometimes terribly, repulsively ugly. Some are lean and sickly-looking, with a hanging underlip and the grin of a skull ; others are corpulent and effeminate. Their limbs are generally disproportionately long ; their bodies are slouching and disjointed ; they have a woman's mincing gait, and cracked falsetto voices. Their passions are excessive ; it is said, also, that they add woman's vices to those of man. This is why they do not enjoy much confidence from their masters or mistresses, who alternately buy their disequilibrating consciences, so that they cannot be considered reliable guards. But of course their master has the power of life and death over them, which makes them think twice before winking at trespassers.

They no longer have a special dress ; they are attired like other men.

As there are exceptions to all rules, there also are eunuchs endowed with "all sorts of good qualities." Among them may be mentioned Aziz Khan, a eunuch presented by Nazr-ed-din Shah to the ex-Grand Vizier, Amin-es-Sultan. He accompanied his master several times to Europe, where his beauty and his manners caused him to be taken for a woman dressed as a man. He enjoyed a certain amount of influence over his master,

He lives like a great personage, and does not perform the duties of his profession. The confidant of the Grand Vizier, who used not to disdain his advice, he has the establishment which suits such a position, and also the consideration—at least apparent—of everybody. He was often the channel to which people had recourse if they had a request to make of the Grand Vizier, to whom he had free access. The principal Imperial wives have their own eunuchs; the other women are in the charge of a corps of eunuchs, who acknowledge the authority of the *Khadjeh-Bashi*, or chief eunuch.

From that Eastern *corps de garde* a corridor leads to a second gate, which opens on a large square garden full of geometrical parterres of shrubs and flowers, with very high plane trees stripped of all their boughs except a tuft at the top. This garden is surrounded with innumerable quarters for the Shah's ladies, buildings of two storeys, which have a brilliant effect as they encircle the grounds with the elaborate tracery of their arched windows—an effect enhanced by the glitter of gorgeous tiles.

In this huge square come and go be vies of women in the national indoor costume, with an immense veil of light cotton or silk laid over the top of the head, in which they envelope themselves more or less, or leave it open and trailing on the ground.

The late Shah did not follow the example of his predecessors. Dr. Solyman says that he had only twelve wives. The *enderoun* was not much less crowded for



Young Dancer from Bokhara.

that reason, for the relations, the slaves, and the servants of these wives — musicians, dancers, fortune-tellers, jesters, merchants, all of them necessarily females — gave a constant animation to the “Palais des Voluptés.”

All these women seemed to live in a perpetual anticipation of the Judgment of Paris. It was who should be the most beautiful; who should possess the most fascinating wardrobe. Jewels and precious stones excited the greatest covetousness. The Shah distributed them prodigally, and on his birthday and at the New Year he gave away turquoises, sapphires, pearls, rubies, emeralds, even diamonds, by handfuls.

This did not hinder them from buying jewels on their own account from the merchant women who come into the harem. They desired to eclipse their rivals by the richness of the fabrics which they wore. Silks of Resht, velvets of Kashan, shawls of Kirman, could not be too expensive; and fabrics from Europe were not less popular. Worth, the great Parisian dressmaker, sells off in Teheran his special silks, when they are left on his hands long enough to be out of fashion. He had a very clever lady there to represent him, who was adored by all the fair of Teheran.

Often a woman who wants to be the only possessor of a specialty buys the whole roll at no matter what price. They have much more tendency to do this now, for several times a woman, jealous of the admiration which a rival had won with a costume of a new material, would

buy some of the same material, and have a costume made of it for one of her slaves, and then invite the "dear friend" to tea served by that slave. The rival's gratification can be imagined.

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In the middle of the *enderoun* garden stands a ravishing white palace, square in shape, two storeys high, culminating in a terrace with an openwork balustrade supporting vases at intervals. This, which is suggestive of the Yildiz Kiosk at Constantinople, is the *Khab-gah*, or Palace of Sleep.

There is a very low ground floor, surrounded by a circular colonnade supporting the balcony that goes round the first floor, to which a broad white marble staircase of fifteen steps gives access.

Numerous French windows, very high and wide, open on all four sides of the house, which has a richly sculptured cornice. It is a very bright and white building, loaded with delicate sculptural ornamentations. Here the present Shah, like his father before him, sleeps under a guard of eunuchs and women, who have this special appointment; for in the *enderoun* the functionaries of the *biroun* are duplicated.

Among the chief of them are the Privy-Confidante, the Keeper of the Chest, the Mistress of Ceremonies, the Mistress of the Wardrobe, the Keeper of the Jewels, the Sender-to-Sleep, and so on.

All the time that he is sleeping, the Shah is massaged.

Since every Oriental woman wishes to have a child—

for the sterile woman is covered with opprobrium, and sterility spells divorce—maternity becomes a passion for every woman of the Imperial harem, and her sole object. A child is the most valuable pledge of the favour of the King, the living pledge which opens the largest field to ambitions—if he is male. Who knows that this son may not become a favourite? His mother will then be loaded with favours and honours. Therefore there is no pilgrimage from which a woman will shrink, no sacrifice that she will hesitate to make, to get the precious talisman—no medicine that she would fear to take. Unscrupulous doctors and dervishes freely exploit the credulity accentuated in these grown-up children by the passion for maternity. The most extravagant medicine and charms are often tried, purchased at their weight in gold. If wolf's gall rubbed on the abdomen does not succeed, the wife will try the swallowing of a little of the sacred earth from Kerbela. One wife, with whom all these attempts had been unsuccessful, was advised, as a last resort, to grate every day a piece of a brick which was supposed to be brought from the tomb of a holy Imam, and to take it internally after early morning prayer. She took this prescription so scrupulously that after a while she died of it.

Among the most highly esteemed talismans are the dried skin of a hyæna, monkey's liver, lynx's hair, and the backbone of an owl—not to mention the most amazing decoctions and broths, and of course transcribed prayers which are enclosed in leather for hanging

round the neck and waist, or invocations and sacred or cabalistic names written on parchment, which is washed in a cup of hot water for the ink to dissolve. The water is then regarded as impregnated with the virtue of the words, and drunk as a potion when making a wish. If one adds a pinch of the powdered muzzle of a monkey—which is made by charring it—the effect is much heightened.

The occupations and amusements of the Shah's wives are restricted and little varied. Like all the rich Persian women, they never use their fingers. Even embroidery and lace-making are left to inferiors. Most of the time is spent in idling, chattering, and visiting, always relieved by *kalyans*, cups of tea, and sweetmeats.

Like their less fortunate sisters, generally they have no education. It appears, however, that some of the wives of the late sovereign have been educated. One of them has the reputation of being literary—a poetess. She has sung the praise of her master in every mood, and all the marvels of creation are cited in her poems for comparison with the King-of-Kings.

Intrigue is also one of their favourite occupations—intrigue to take away from a rival the favour of the King, or political intrigue. An instinctive diplomacy is brought into action in these cases with rare ability. This is why some ambitious men have recourse to the help of their wives, who, by presents and flattery, win influential support in the Shah's harem. More than one important affair has been brought to a suc-

cessful conclusion, more than one favour obtained thus.

The women of the harem are childish and easily amused. Marvellous stories, more or less based on the *Arabian Nights*, in which the details relating to love are recounted with inconceivable crudity, the buffooneries of old women, their burlesque imitations, their clownings, ravish them. One of these has won in Teheran the reputation and vogue of an Yvette Guilbert with us. She tells stories and illustrates them herself, impersonating the characters of the romance. She imitates with as much fidelity the shy attitude of a blushing bride as the simpering of a middle-aged woman. And when a dragon, a devil, or a djinn comes into the plot, she succeeds in pulling the skin of her face, turning up her nose with a string, turning her eyelids out, and so on, assuming the most terrible and monstrous aspects imaginable. A story told by her is as much appreciated in Teheran, and as highly paid, as a monologue by Chevalier in London.

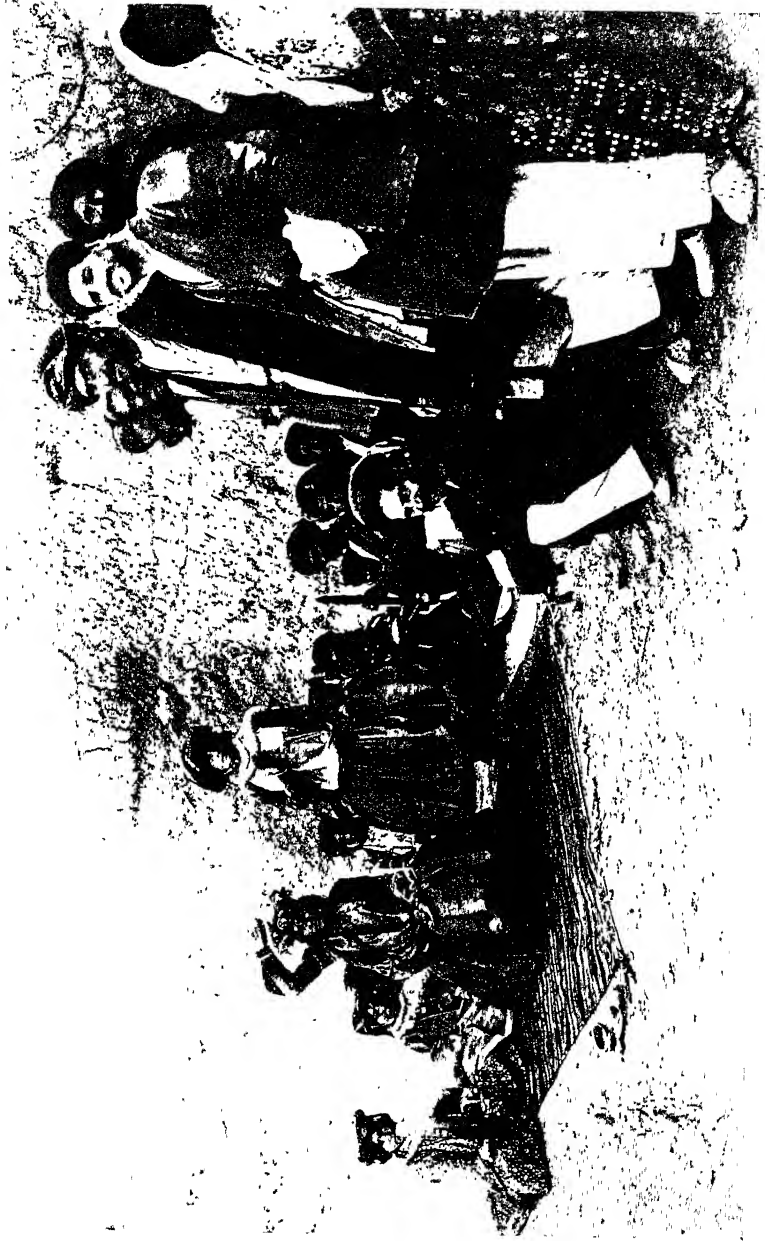
Music, singing, dancing, are popular. There is a sort of academy where little girls with promising looks are instructed in these arts with a view to the Imperial *enderoun*.

The *Rakkass*, or dancers, make their début very early; it is not an uncommon thing to see a child of ten years old dancing with considerable suppleness, if not grace.

The majority of them are supplied by the nomad

Susmani tribe, which might be called the "gipsies of Persia." As soon as their daughters and sons are able to walk they are taught the first steps of dancing. Then their vertebral column is made supple by making them bend their heads backwards till they touch the ground—this acrobatic movement is highly appreciated in the dance—next they learn how to walk on their hands; to turn somersaults; to balance on their upturned palms and on their foreheads glasses, daggers, or peacocks' feathers. Besides the rhythmic steps, which have little variety, and the acrobatic feats, the interest of the dance is heightened by pantomimic scenes, always immodest, and sometimes obscene.

It is the languishing movement of the inamorata waiting for the beloved. He comes joyfully. To provoke him she flies away. He pursues and captures her with a long gauze scarf. After a thousand evolutions with the scarf she is a captive and his slave. She will offer him her heart in the shape of the rose which adorned her bosom. She will pluck the petals from her heart and rain them on the beloved's moon-shaped face, while he, in elaborate contortions, will show his agility and strength. Then she will hand him the cup while the bottle of wine is balanced on her forehead. But jealousy intervenes to blacken the looks of the beloved, who, brandishing a dagger in each hand, menaces her with a thousand deaths. She soothes him with voluptuous caresses, and they prove their mutual love to each other. . . . The music waxes fast and furious; it grows quicker



The Celebrated Dancers of the Sucmani Tribe

and quicker. The dancers rise, and begin spinning wildly round and round, until, breathless, foaming, exhausted, they sink to the ground, where they writhe, gasp, and swoon.

The rhythm of the music is marked with the cracking of the fingers or by the slapping of tiny cymbals attached to the thumb and second finger.

The costumes do not differ much from the ordinary indoor dress of the Persian woman—only by the addition of straight trousers below their skirts for some, and long skirts like crinolines for the others. Their hair falls in wavy curls down their shoulders.

One of the *à la mode* dances is the Franghi dance, in which the European gait is imitated and ridiculed. The costumes used for this are more or less European. Another very characteristic dance, recalling those which we see in Turkey, is performed with the feet and legs quite still, and with undulations and quiverings of the muscles of the stomach, breast, and arms.

Of course the dancers are considered of an inferior rank; but this does not prevent them from cherishing the ambition of improving their position. They never forget that one of them became the favourite wife of Feth Ali Shah. Their career has only a short run, for seventeen or eighteen is the age limit.

The Shah has similarly a troupe of dancing boys who pass through the *enderoun* to the *biroun*, and they may be seen on the official occasions where their presence is ordered, for instance at races. They look so much like

their feminine colleagues, since they wear the same coiffure and the same costume, that they could easily be mistaken.

The troupe includes a buffoon of one or the other sex, whose business it is to parody the mimicry of the dancers. Sometimes he disguises himself as Sultan of Roum—that is, Turkey—by painting a face on his stomach, concealing the upper part of his body in an enormous turban, and adding false arms. To give different expressions to the face, he stretches or contracts the skin of his stomach with his hands. The delusion is so perfect that one does not realise at first how it is effected.

The wives of the Shah receive many visits.

The Favourites, who each have a separate establishment in their own part of the *enderoun*, hold regular levées, to which crowd the wives of the men who are thronging the Court of the Shah, on the other side of the wall, in the *biroun*. They have also their At Homes, to which on some rare occasions they invite the European women of distinction residing in Teheran. The Shah in this case comes to the party and distributes to the Western guests costly souvenirs. At other times they go and pay calls on princesses or wives of grandees, where they remain for dinner and the evening. The hostess displays for the occasion the greatest luxury in decorations and delicacies.

When they go out, not only are they muffled up like other women, but the carriages in which they drive—

huge closed landaus upholstered in canary-coloured silk—are surrounded by eunuchs on horseback. In front gallop *jelowdars*—outriders in scarlet laced with gold, holding silver maces, who shout, “Be blind!” Armed with whips, the eunuchs force the bystanders to fly into the side streets, or to stand with their faces to the wall or against a tree, or to lie with their faces to the ground, in order not to profane with their gaze the phantom silhouettes of the Royal wives. Behind the carriage ride men-servants, some carrying the silver samovars and *kalyans*, and all the articles needed for tea, wrapped up in precious cashmere shawls; others holding in front of them the pet animals—gazelles or guépards. Then comes the military escort, composed of Kurdish irregulars, wild and ferocious-looking in their picturesque national dress.

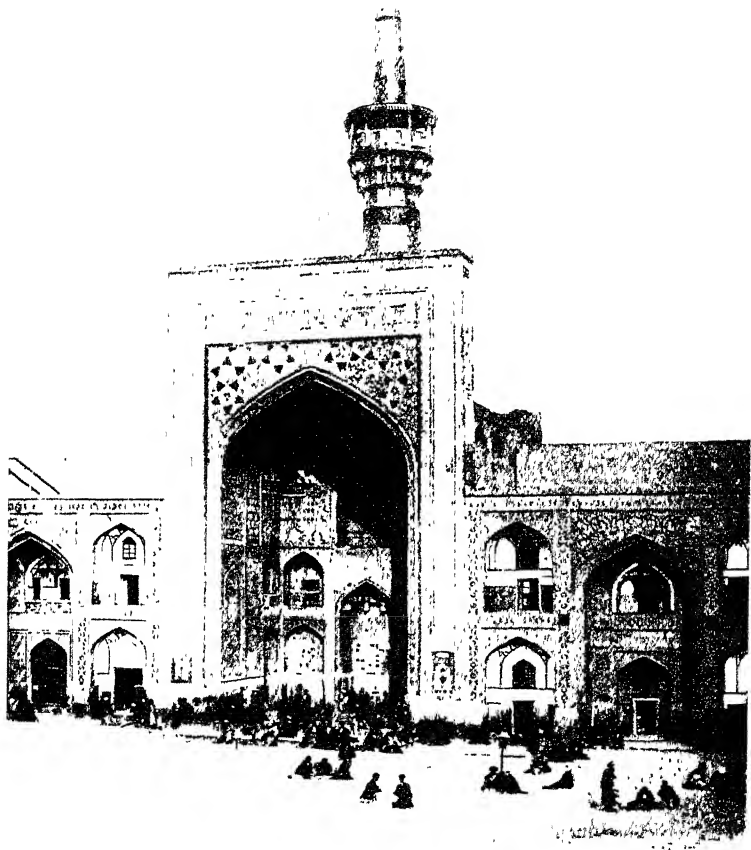
The populace does not object to this treatment. It is, after all, flattered every time it is reminded of the splendour and state which surrounds everything connected with its magnificent sovereign.

One might almost classify among amusements the pilgrimages of Imperial wives. They would enjoy making them oftener, for the novelty introduced into the monotony of their lives no less than for the favours they have to ask of the saints. But they very rarely give themselves the satisfaction, for it is not prudent for them to go far from the “Centre of the Universe”—their master. Their rivals would take advantage of their absence to work against them, so they must content

themselves with pilgrimages in the vicinity—the mosque-tomb of Shah-Abdoul-Azim, where Nasr-ed-din was assassinated, which is only a few miles from Teheran, is one of their favourite shrines.

Only the veterans can allow themselves the long absence of a distant pilgrimage; Koum or Meshed are therefore chosen. Koum is the true feminine pilgrimage, for there is the tomb of the thrice holy Fatima-el-Masuma, the Immaculate, sister of Imam Reza, Protector of Persia, whose tomb is in Meshed. The legend says that he comes every Friday to see his sister in Koum.

This Meshed, the principal town of the N.E. province of Khorassan, is not to be confused with Meshed-Houssein, or Kerbela, which is for the Persians, and all the Shiites, very holy and a pilgrimage place. It was there that Imam Houssein met his martyrdom on the 10th of Moharrem in the year 61 of the Hegira (*i.e.* October 680 A.D.) It is on Turkish territory, about fifty miles to the south-west of Baghdad, and not far from the ruins of Babylon, and near the right bank of the Euphrates. There are to be found the tomb of Houssein and the mosque of Hassan. At Kerbela, as well as at the neighbouring shrine of Nejef or Meshed-Ali, the faithful who live there are secure from going to hell. Many Shiites, amongst them the late Shah, leave it in their wills that they should be buried there. Corpses are consequently brought there from Persia and all the Shiite world—even from Bombay. Kerbela has therefore



The famous pilgrimage shrine of Meshed.

become a vast Necropolis of the Faithful with a very bad name for salubrity.

Owing to the insanitary condition of the corpses brought, all sorts of epidemics are apt to arise there, chief among them the dreaded plague.

The cemetery is in the centre of the town. Even the houses are used as tombs, and the earth which is dug up is sold in little cakes to the pilgrims for them to place on the ground and rest their heads against whilst praying after their return. The principal industry of the inhabitants is the interring of the corpses brought to rest in the holy earth.

Meshed entails a very long journey from Teheran, and the Shah sometimes takes some of his wives with him on this pilgrimage. When he does, he has to take with him an immense train of baggage animals.

If Mohammed Ali—that is the name of the new Shah—had the wealth of Haroun-ar-Rashid, his wives would imitate Zobeida, who, when she went to Mecca, had miles of carpets spread on the way in order that the white dromedary on which she rode should not soil his feet with the dust of the road. Long files of camels bore presents destined for the shrine, and files still longer bore precious coffers containing the thousand and one robes of that princess of the “Thousand and One Nights.”

The actual state of the Persian finances is far from admitting of such sumptuousness—even in a dream. However, the suite and the escort who accompany a

Persian princess on these occasions are comparable to that of Queen Elizabeth on her visit to Kenilworth.

The *enderoun* removes with the Shah.

Muzaffer-ed-din, less nomad than his father, who spent months in hunting and shooting in the forest provinces of the north, did not leave home except to go to his summer palaces, gardens, or hunting pavilions situated in the proximity of Teheran. You did not meet any more those interminable strings of old chaises, *Takhteravan*, and horses ridden by women sitting astride. You did not find two or three hundred women following His Majesty as in the old days; he took but few wives, though they had a numerous suite of servants and slaves.

When he went to Europe they used to accompany him to the frontier.

The Shah's *enderouns* are not confined to Teheran. Among the most notable of those in the country is Niavaran, newly built, which is provided with modern conveniences mixed with the more picturesque discomfort of the good old times, and lit with electric light.

One of the best *enderouns* is that of Sahab-Kranieh. Here there are a couple of score of little dwellings of three or four rooms apiece, each with a verandah in front, scattered over a splendid park with centenarian planes.

That of Echretabad is more curious. It consists of very small, low houses exactly alike, three or four feet apart, built round a circular lake and surrounded

by a ring of poplar trees. It has the severe and mysterious aspect of a cloister, dwarfed by a huge tower of three storeys glittering with the reflection of multi-coloured tiles—the *Khabgah* or Palace of Sleep of the “Asylum of the Universe.”

Such are the establishments of the harem of the Shah-in-Shah. The light of the Occident has hardly penetrated its veils. Here we have in this twentieth century the enchantments of Schehrezade continued in a framework of luxury, charm, and mystery; but dwelling therein is a new sovereign, who has proscribed the red intoxication of blood.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SHAH IN HIS PALACE

IN the *Meidan-i-Toupkhaneh*, the great square of Teheran, at the first glimmer of dawn, horsemen, holding long staves with silver handles, were making a way through the crowd for the Royal cortège coming back from one of the Shah's hunting pavilions.

First came the *ferrashes*, carrying whips, and the *Shaters*, or runners, in velvet helmets plumed with peacocks' feathers; then came the *Nasakdji Bashi*, or chief executioner, dressed in blood-red, and the *fellekeh* of the bastinadoes, drawn by richly caparisoned mules. All this medley of gay colours, all this pomp of functionaries and soldiers, was surrounding a chariot too strange for the magnificent sovereigns of Iran even to have dreamt of it—the motor car of Muzaffer-ed-din Shah, of the Kadjar tribe.

That strange retinue, in which the antique and the barbaric was the prelude to that ultra-modern note, disappeared into the palace, or rather conglomeration of palaces called the *Ark*, a kind of royal city surrounded by walls, which formerly had the additional protection of a moat.

The palace so called constitutes a part of the *Ark*. Like every Persian house, it is divided in two parts: the *biroun*, or men's dwelling; and the *enderoun*, or harem.

The Royal *biroun* consists of a mass of heterogeneous buildings surrounding the *Gulistan*, or rose garden, a perfumed oasis where huge fountains spread sheets of rippling coolness; where clear streams in channels of pale turquoise blue tiles glide between green lawns gay with peacocks, swans, and doves; where, behind masses of rare plants and flowers, rise groves of dark cypresses, pines, planes, and willows.

On the east side of the *Gulistan* stands the *Shems-el-Emaret*, or Sun of the Palaces, with its two square many-storeyed towers covered by blue tiles with yellow arabesques. From these towers, in which they are concealed behind majolica *mousharabiehs*, the women of the harem, always very inquisitive persons, watch the comings and goings of the *Gulistan* and the crowded and animated entrance to the bazars. At the foot of the towers, in an open gallery, are the Gobelins tapestry representing the Coronation of the Faun and the Triumph of Venus, given by King Louis-Phillipe to Mohammed Shah.

In the north part of the Museum, a huge chamber of unimaginable richness, the ground is covered with the rarest carpets, masterpieces of the ancient Persian art. There too is to be found the celebrated Peacock Throne, taken from the Grand Mogul in the days of

yore by the victorious Nadir Shah. This throne is a dazzling marvel; it is covered with sheets of gold on which precious enamels, fantastic birds, and chimeras set with rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and turquoises shine, culminating in the supreme radiation of a diamond sun. It is said to be worth six million pounds.

A few chairs and tables of the same precious materials—gold, enamels, and precious stones—are still to be seen, but the greatest part of them have unhappily been sent to the Mint. It is in this room that the Shah holds his diplomatic receptions.

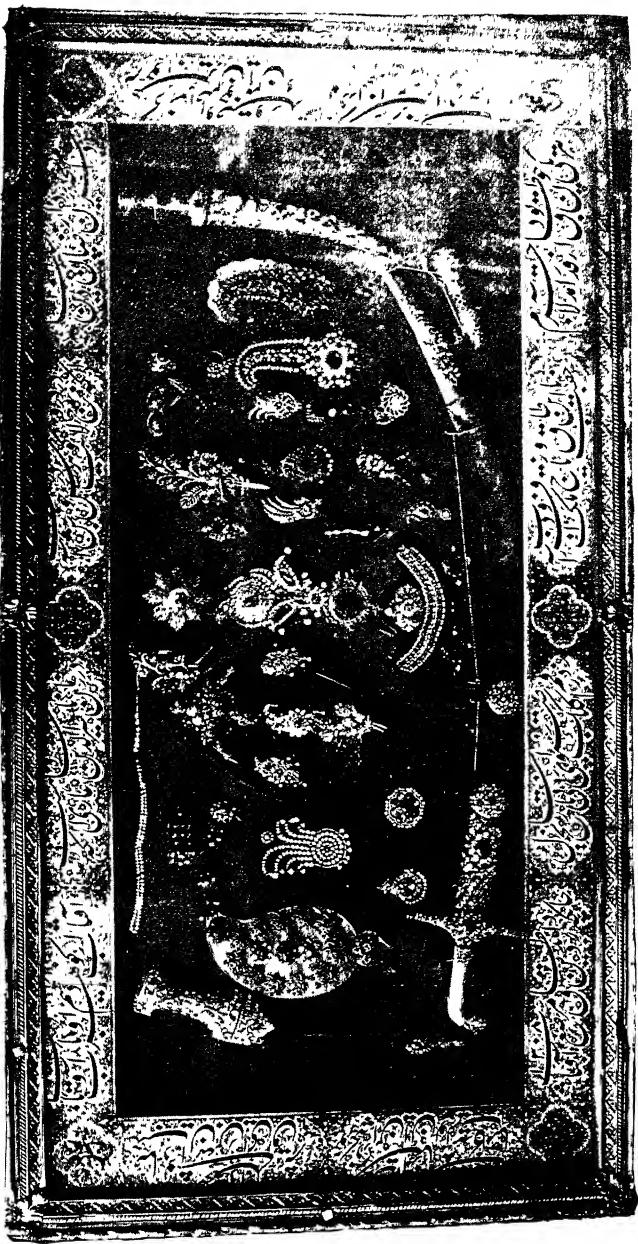
Then comes the Room of Diamonds, *Otag-i-Almas*, which has its walls entirely covered with mirrors and looking-glass cut and set in the shape of diamonds rising in stalagmites, and falling again from the ceiling in scintillating stalactites.

In the Library, which comes next, in fragrant cedar cupboards, are to be found by the thousand precious ancient manuscripts adorned with invaluable miniatures.

One of the other rooms is called the *Otag-i-Adjah*, or the Room of Hunger, to characterise the "avidity" with which this room fills itself with treasures.

At the end of the Palace is the Orangery, and close to it the *Porte des Voluptés*, which can only be crossed by the Shah and the eunuchs, for it leads to the sacred harem.

On the south is the *Emaret-i-Badghir*, or Palace of the Ventilators, whose square turrets contain the engines



Jewels given by the Shah of Persia to the Shrine of Meshed

which generate the air and distribute it to the interior. Round it are several buildings containing aviaries full of singing birds and cages with golden bars full of rare animals.

At the west stands a little palace in the Louis xvi. style, of which the Shah is particularly fond. It contains his private apartments; his picture gallery flashing with the splendour of a marvellous collection of old arms; and a drawing-room whose rich furniture was presented by the Sultan of Turkey. In this drawing-room, standing upon a table and protected by a glass shade, is the famous terrestrial globe in a solid gold frame encrusted with diamonds. The geographical divisions of the sphere are marked by precious stones of various colours: Persia by turquoises, the national stone; the town of Teheran by a big diamond taken from the corpse of Ashraf, King of Afghanistan; and Mound Demavend by a ruby extracted from Shah-Rouck by Agha Mohammed Shah's torturers; the seas are made of emeralds; India of amethysts; Africa of rubies; England and France of diamonds; and so on. This work cost one million tomans, or £200,000.

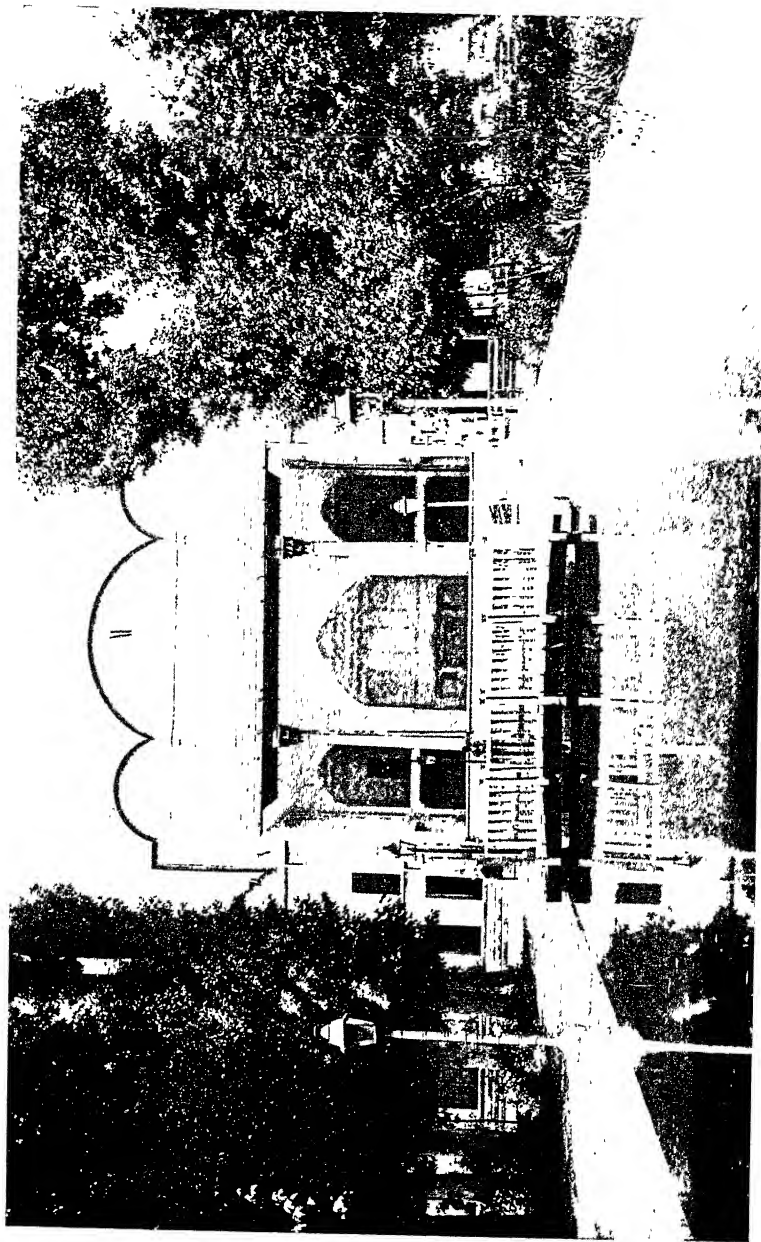
Leaving the Shah's apartments, one crosses a gallery leading to a circular court surrounded by the *Vezaret-Omour-Kharedjeh*, or Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a succession of windows in wood, curiously carved. A grill of delicate work divides it from a great garden shaded by plane trees.

In the centre of this garden is a long basin with

playing fountains. The palace fronting it has a huge recess in its façade. This is the *Talar*, or Throne Hall; it is entirely open except for two alabaster columns supporting the entablature. These were brought from Persepolis in some miraculous way; for there is no road, and their size is enormous: they are spiral and very lofty. The *Talar* is adorned with the portraits of the earlier Shahs of the dynasty; its walls are encrusted with facets of mirrors cut like diamonds. At the bottom of the chamber is a dark arcade dimly lit with stained glass panes whose coloured lights are reflected in a fountain. In front of the *Talar* is the throne—a platform of transparent white marble about eight feet by five—carved and gilt. It is supported in the middle by short columns resting on the backs of lions, and at each side by djinns or divs in feminine costume. The marble back, which is carried round the sides in a sort of balustrade, is of tracery as delicate as lace. It is called *Takht-i-Marmar*—Marble Throne.

In front of the *Talar* round the fountain that morning (it was the New Year, or *No-Rouz*) dignitaries came and went, with their kolahs, turbaned in white shawls with designs of red and green running through them. They were dressed in simple tunics flowing down to their feet, made of the finest cashmere glittering with diamond breast-clasps.

Suddenly on this crowd, motley, moving, jabbering, fell a respectful silence. Heads bowed, attitudes became humble and suppliant. The King-of-Kings entered.



A Talar with the customary "tank,"

He slowly crossed the gardens, ascended the steps of the throne, upon which he seated himself in the Oriental way, on a carpet of pearls and pearl-embroidered cushions. His black, full-skirted frock-coat, buttoned to the throat, was lost in the blaze of precious stones. The diamond aigrette, the emblem of power, spread a fan of fire over a melancholy and gentle visage. With a rhythmic, unconscious gesture, he caressed his moustache and gazed round with tired, mysterious, distant eyes, which looked, but did not see, whilst his favourite poet recited, accentuating and hammering out each syllable, the glories of the tribe of Kajar. Every time the sublime name of Mouzaffer-ed-din was pronounced, the crowd bowed.

In front of the Shah were ranged up amongst the dignitaries of State such of the tribesmen of Kajar as were in Teheran.

The members of the Ministry of Ceremonies, at the head of whom was the Minister, with his long gold mace glowing with emeralds and encrusted with other precious stones, advanced four steps and bowed, then took four steps back and bowed, while the poetry was going on.

From the lips of the Shah a few words fell, always benevolent, such as: "The weather is favourable to the crops. A little rain would perhaps be useful. The fulness of the harvest makes the happiness of the people. Functionaries must make the law respected, and set the example of disinterestedness, impartiality,

and equity. Justice is the basis of society and the pillar of the Empire. Let us thank the Prophet and Ali for the blessings that they pour with bountiful hands upon Iran. Let us pray them to continue these blessings in the future."

Then all the people present cried "Glory to God, to the Prophet, to Ali! Glory, Grace, and Happiness to the King-of-Kings!"

Then His Majesty was presented with a cup of coffee and a gold *kalyan* coruscating with gems—a *kalyan* without fire in which enormous rubies took the place of embers.

Meanwhile the troops filed past with a brutal thunder-clap of clashing military bands.

CHAPTER XIX

COURT RECEPTIONS OF THE DIPLOMATIC BODY

SERVANTS dressed in the red Persian liveries laced with faded gold, carrying long silver maces, are sent to the various Legations to escort the diplomats to the Court. They walk on each side of the carriages: the carriages are thus obliged to proceed at a walking pace. When they reach the gate of the palace, drums and trumpets crash out a salute, and the diplomats cross the gardens and enter a sort of waiting-room to attend the Shah's pleasure. It is an appointment, but the Shah never observes it, because it is necessary to his importance to keep people waiting. The Master of Ceremonies, dressed in a long cashmere robe with puffed sleeves, adorned with large oval clasps embossed with precious stones and hanging chains of pearls, comes to say that His Majesty is ready to receive, and, accompanied by the members of the Ministry of the Ceremonies, escorts the members of the Diplomatic Corps to the Hall of Reception. This is the hall called the Museum in the previous chapter.

The Minister of each Legation walks in front, followed by his secretaries in order. At the right is the Embassy

of Turkey, then the European Diplomatic Corps in the order of their Ministers' seniority. They keep their hats on and also their boots, which is an extraordinary thing in Persia, where everybody must dis-boot in the presence of the Shah. This has been a matter of much diplomatic discussion, and formed one of the articles of the Turkmanchay treaty. Up to that date the European diplomats were obliged to put red stockings over their boots and trousers.

The Museum is a very long room, and the Legations stand at one end, each in single file behind its Minister. At the other end, where the Peacock Throne stands, the Master of Ceremonies shouts an announcement in a very loud and pompous tone; and the Shah suddenly appears with the Grand Vizier and two or three other viziers, and remains standing in front of the throne. This has been another subject of diplomatic arrangement. It was settled that as the diplomats could not sit in the presence of the Shah, the Shah should not sit in their presence.

The diplomats advance a certain distance and make a profound bow with the hand at the salute; then they make a second advance and a second bow, and a third when they come nearer His Majesty; then they pause. The Master of Ceremonies introduces them to the Shah one after the other seriatim, and they bow to His Majesty haloed by the rays of the Peacock's Throne.

This throne has been the subject of several attempted

robberies. It is said that there was once a parrot on the top of it made of a single emerald, which has been stolen. Lately, when the Shah came back from his travels in Europe, he noticed some scraps of gold on the carpet, which led him to the discovery that some stones had been stolen from it. He was furious, and when, a few days afterwards, the culprit was discovered in the person of a young boy of fourteen who had lately been engaged to sweep the palace, he was put to the torture to make him disclose where he had concealed the stones. He at once declared that he had buried them at the foot of a tree in the Rose Garden. The Shah ordered him to be executed instantly, and his body remained exposed for a few days at the gate of city, close to the execution ground.

The Shah dresses in a black Persian frock-coat with gathered skirts, which is thickly studded with diamonds; he has diamond epaulettes, and a scimitar with a diamond scabbard; and on the tall lambskin cap called the *kolah* there is an aigrette or *jika* with an enormous oblong diamond, weighing one hundred and eighty-six carats, called the *Daria-i-Noor*—the Sea of Light. The effect of it is spoiled by bad cutting. His dress varies with the importance of the occasion. The diamond costume is reserved for the most important; the pearl costume is frogged with ropes of pearl: a great English jeweller expressed on one occasion his willingness to buy the Shah as he stood in this dress for four millions. There are also ruby, turquoise, and emerald costumes, but the

base is always the black frock-coat : it is the epaulettes, buttons, and so on that are varied.

Muzaffer-ed-din Shah was nervous in the presence of Europeans ; he used to stand with one hand on his scimitar and stroke his enormous moustache with the other in order to maintain his composure. As has been said, he used to utter some platitudes such as : " Thank God we have had a fortunate year. Rain has been plentiful, and we hope that God will make the harvest abundant." If he was in a genial mood he inquired after the respective sovereigns. " What are they all doing ? Has the King of England won the yachting race ? Has the Kaiser killed many deer ? Was the Sultan of Turkey pleased with the two girls I sent him lately ? How is the Czar ? " To which the Russian Minister replies with forced politeness, " How can he be anything else but well since he is noticed by your Majesty ? "

He addressed a few words like that to each Minister, and then said, " You are dismissed." All the diplomats backed out bowing three times as at their entry, a perilous performance in a Persian room full of little carpets. More than one old diplomat has measured his length on these little carpets.

Of course on these occasions the Shah was crippled by the fear of causing jealousy ; he was more practical when he received a single ambassador. He always spoke in Persian, which was translated by the Foreign Office interpreters into French.

Muzaffer-ed-din was a good man ; his Court was



Imperial Jika, set in the largest emerald in the world, and
diamond ornaments

[Photo by Prince Abd-Oullah Mirza.]

paved with good intentions which he had not sufficient energy to carry out. Unlike his ancestors, he hated bloodshed, and while he was on the throne instances of capital punishment were rare. Though he was a great sportsman, a fine shot who could hit with a rifle a coin thrown up in the air, he was as humane to animals as he was to human beings, as was shown at the sacrifice of the camel.

On the day of Kourban Beiram, when every Mussulman has to make a sacrifice in memory of the Sacrifice of Abraham, the Shah is supposed to immolate a camel, whilst his subjects content themselves with sheep or fowls. But Muzaffer-ed-din did not like doing it himself, and relinquished the Royal privilege to a man who for the occasion dressed himself as if he was the Shah—a sort of *Rex Sacrificulus*. He rode on horseback with a suite, and the crowd made a close escort for him and the camel, who walked with his usual supercilious indifference. The camel had to be gorgeously caparisoned: the man who simulated the Shah had a lance, and when the procession arrived at a certain point, the square in front of the Nagaristan Palace, he drove the spear into the throat of the camel, which had been despoiled of its ornaments, and the crowd, rushing upon the poor animal, began cutting it to pieces before it was dead. A piece streaming with blood was put on the top of a lance and carried in triumph by the simulator of the Shah, who went to the palace to take it to the real Shah.

Muzaffer-ed-din was very fond of music. He

detested thunder: whenever it thundered, he used to take refuge in a vault where the noise was drowned, and had a *Mollah*, especially appointed for the purpose, to calm his misgivings.

He was also very fond of novelties. He was much interested, for example, in photography. He instituted a Photographer of State, who received £2000 a year, and was expected to buy every new patent that came out. Muzaffer-ed-din was photographed every half-hour—if he saw a European with a camera in the street he used to stop to let him take his photograph. Every kind of machinery, from the most important inventions to penny toys, interested him. It was characteristic of him to pay no more attention to Marconi's discovery than to a shilling automatic toy.

Not long ago, among the new things from Europe were little canoes in rubber which were blown out and took the shape of a boat, and were designed to support several people. The Shah was very interested: they were tried on the lake of the palace. Four fat nobles were embarked in one, whose valve was partly opened, and the boat was pushed from land.

It slowly sank till its occupants were left floundering in the water. The Shah enjoyed himself vastly, especially when they were brought out looking as drenched as seals.

The poor men, though they got rheumatism, were delighted to have made the Shah laugh. They received pensions on the spot.



Reception of an Ambassador by the Shah of Persia. From an ancient painting.

CHAPTER XX

THE TRAVELS OF THE SHAH

MUZAFFER-ED-DIN craved for the dissipations of European capitals ; but the state of his finances had deprived him of this solace, until the conclusion of the loan with Russia, which so nearly jeopardised Persian independence, gave him a command of ready cash. The departure of a Shah for a long journey is a terrible business ; everything is paralysed.

The Shah's departure was fixed for the 11th of April, but he postponed it, and he was to leave Teheran on the next day only if he did not change his mind in the interval, since there had been an earthquake on the day before, which, without having caused any fatalities, had nevertheless frightened His Majesty, who considered it a bad omen.

If he had listened to the astrologers, he would very likely not have gone at all. On the morning of the 11th, at 10 a.m., the Axis of the Universe received the Diplomatic Body in his palace to make his adieux.

This audience was depressing. The Shah looked tired and ill ; the Grand Vizier had to help him to make a little speech to the Foreign Ministers. In this he bade

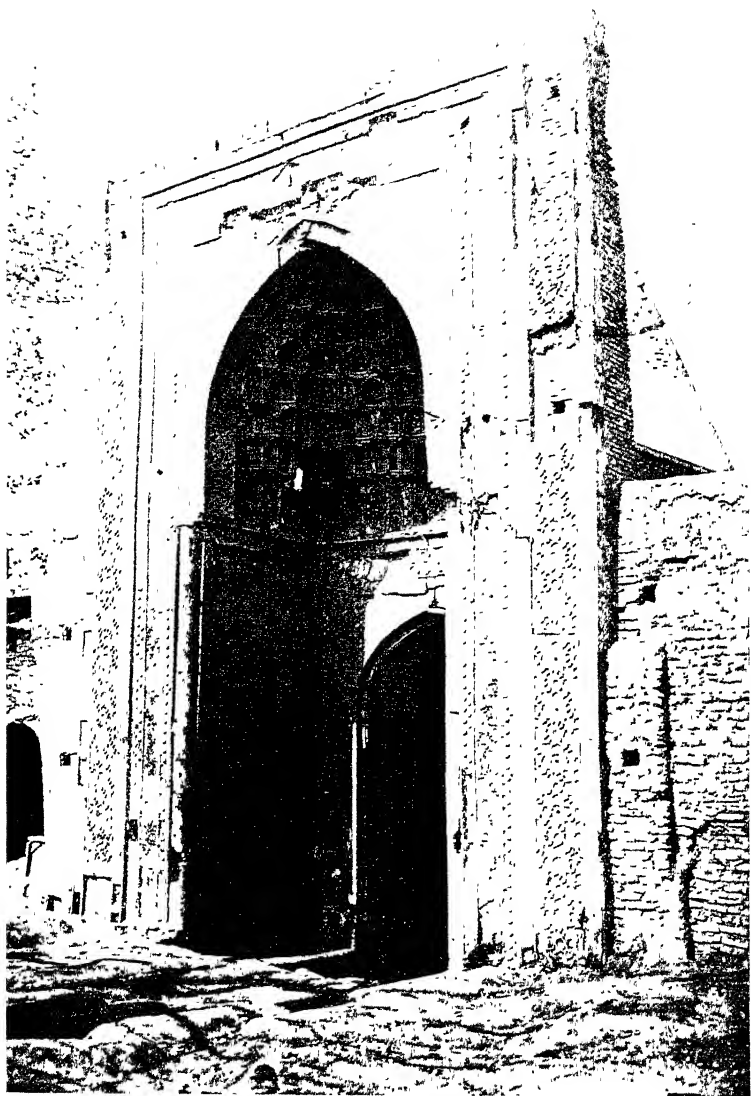
farewell and announced that he had placed the regency in the hands of his son, Shoa-es-Saltaneh. In going out most of the Ministers asked themselves if His Majesty would be able to bear the fatigues of the journey.

The Grand Vizier in his visit of farewell to the Legations did not conceal that he was uncertain if his august master would be in a condition to accomplish his projected tour in the different Courts of Europe after having finished his cure at Contrexeville.

"We shall go certainly," said he, "to visit the Paris Exhibition, but for the rest—that will depend on His Majesty's health." It is certain that the life of the Shah could not stand a shock.

In spite of the astrologers and of the bad omens, the Shah left on the 12th. Early in the morning we got on horseback, and as nobody knew at what o'clock the Shah would leave the palace, we ran through the streets that he was going to follow, in order not to miss him.

This was, however, full of interest. From the palace to the gate of the town the streets were crowded with people, especially the dark phantoms of women. An extraordinary display of police in the streets and up on the roofs of the houses seemed to indicate that the prince did not feel very sure of the sentiments of the people towards him. The fact is that there were many malcontents, and it was not difficult to guess why; for it was not fair that in the state of poverty to which Persia has been reduced, its sovereign should go



**Tomb of Bajazet I., Sultan of Turkey, built by Shah Khodabendeh,
near Shahrud.**

to Europe to spend on his personal pleasures a great part of the money borrowed from Russia.

All along the road, which was barren and stony, lines had been drawn with stones, ranged with a certain eye to decoration, in order to facilitate the alignment of the troops, more or less well-exercised, who were to pay the honours to the Shah.

After having traversed the white road, through the multi-coloured and picturesque crowd, and seen the troops take up their positions, I came back with K. K. to the town to meet His Majesty, while the French Minister and his friends posted themselves on the rising ground near the camp waiting for the arrival of the Shahin-Shah. He and they had to wait a long time. It was only at half-past eleven that the Shah passed the gate of the town called the Aspdovane (horse race), in a heavy caleche drawn by eight horses with postilions at a walking pace.

Just as the Shah eats always alone, it is also only alone that he can drive. He suffers from the same disabilities as the Pope.

At the door of the carriage on the right side rode the Grand Vizier, Shoa-es-Saltaneh, and a few other grandees. On the left, the Sepeh-Salar, Kajar Prince, Minister of War. The troops were drawn up only on this side of the road. In front, at the back, and on the right side of the Imperial carriage were cavalry in brilliant uniforms, some wearing the dress of our French cuirassiers.

As the cortège advanced, the soldiers presented arms and shouted hurrahs without enthusiasm, and the bands played the National Anthem. None of it seemed to interest His Majesty much ; he was talking at the time to the Grand Vizier and Shoa-es-Saltaneh, with his back turned to the troops.

When he got to the camp of Darecht, the Shah sat down under a tent, richly furnished and draped with precious stuffs that the Sepeh Salar had put up for the purpose near a broad stream. There were beautiful carpets, a table spread with fruits and sweetmeats, and one arm-chair—one only, for no one can sit in the presence of the Shah. Orange trees and oleanders, and a thousand other pots of flowers, ranged along the bank of the river, gave a gay aspect and concealed the barrenness of the landscape.

With the assurance characteristic of Europeans in the East, we passed the sentinels, who dared not say anything to Franghees of our importance, and we went to the right edge of the stream in front of the tent. His Majesty having noticed us, grouped all his suite round him, and we took a photograph.

The Shah said that if the photograph turned out well, he would like to have one sent to him. But, unfortunately, on our way back an accident happened to the plates.

With a very low court bow, we retired backwards as we were accustomed to do at the palace.

After taking a few moments of rest, and drinking a

sherbet, the Shah mounted his carriage and started for the encampment of Ken. The cannon were booming all the time.

As soon as the Shah went off surrounded by a strong escort, the immense crowd which was going to accompany him to the frontier—soldiers, courtiers, and retainers, several thousands of them—swarmed after him. It is a plague for the country which is traversed.

The governors of towns offer large sums of money for the Shah to take another route. The Shah accepts the money and goes or not as he chooses. Locusts could do no more. His horses eat all the crops in the fields, and his men steal everything, or openly take it by force.

The regular suite taken by the Shah numbered two thousand persons, in spite of the efforts of the Grand Vizier to reduce as much as possible the Royal camp. The retinue of these people and the camp followers made it up to four or five thousand. In order to furnish the means of transport for all these persons, it was necessary to procure eight thousand baggage animals, which was not the least difficult problem to solve. This is why the Shah was obliged to halt four days at the first stage, at the village of Ken, to wait till everything was ready. The Saheb-Jam, Minister of Transports, who had charge of all camels, mules, and donkeys of the Government, was Asef-es-Saltaneh, the son-in-law of the Shah. That did not prevent his receiving the bastinado on that occasion, as he was

made responsible, though it was not his fault, for that delay.

Outside the towns no means of subsistence could be obtained. Everything had to be taken with them—the food for the beast as well as the food for the man. The journey to Tabriz cost several million francs—it is said four millions—which could have been partly economised if it had been possible to overcome the Shah's aversion to the voyage on the Caspian Sea, and take the route by Resht and Baku. But His Majesty had a terrible fear of the sea, all the more terrible because he had never set foot on board ship, and very likely never seen the sea, otherwise than in pictures. It had, therefore, been impossible to contemplate the Caspian Sea route, which is at once the shortest and the least expensive.

We wondered what would His Majesty do when he came to go over to England?

CHAPTER XXI

GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE

“THE vice approved by the king becomes a virtue : to seek counsel opposed to him is to imbrue one’s hands in one’s own blood.”—*Sa’di*.

Theoretically, the Shah is absolute master of the kingdom, and may do what he chooses. He nominates at his pleasure the ministers, governors, functionaries ; and takes their offices away from them, and can just as easily confiscate their goods.

Theoretically, also, all his subjects are his slaves. He has the power of life or death over them.

Theoretically, all the land belongs to him, with the exception of the religious demesnes.

I say theoretically, for practice introduces certain modifications. For example, a prince, a minister, a governor, the head of a tribe, etc., may acquire enough power to defy the Shah—not to mention the eternal subject of the power of the Church.

For example, under Nasr-er-din Shah, one of his own sons, Zil-es-Sultan, who is still Governor of Ispahan, established an independent principality in the south of Persia. He had an army more powerful

than that of his father; the soldiers were better equipped, were drilled by officers, natives of India, trained in the armies of England. He had good guns, and governed with a strong hand.

After the visit to Ispahan of one of the Foreign Ministers, everything was changed. For that Minister reported to the Shah what he had seen, and His Majesty was frightened. It was no use confronting him with his army, so he resorted to persuasion. He invited his son to visit him at Teheran. But it was a long time before he could persuade him to accept the invitation, the suspicions of Zil-es-Sultan being aroused by this sudden ebullition of paternal sentiment.

But at last he had to come. As soon as he was in Teheran, he understood that his suspicions were well founded, for he was more like a hostage in his palace than a son paying a visit to his father. He was well guarded to prevent any attempt at flight to the seat of his power, and during his stay in the capital, which was of long duration, all his army was disorganised and distributed over the most distant provinces: his guns were brought to Teheran. And when all the necessary precautions had been taken, the Shah presented him with a *khalat*, or robe of honour, and allowed him to return to his Government.

He remained Governor of Ispahan during the whole of the reign of his brother, Muzaffer-ed-din, and the new Shah, Mohammed Ali, has confirmed him in that position.

He consoles himself for the loss of his ambitions by making a collection of hats. Every European traveller who passes through Ispahan is shown that collection, and if the traveller is wearing a hat of a shape which is not represented in the collection, the prince asks for it, and makes a nice present in return.

With his harmless lunacy he combines Oriental severities. As I write these words, the population of Ispahan is in revolt against his heavy hand. A thousand of them are refugees in the gardens of the British Consulate, as there were ten thousand in the gardens of the British Legation at Teheran a few months ago. One has to consider contingencies in taking a house in Persia.

The example of Amin-es-Sultan, the greatest statesman of modern Persia, who, after three years' exile in Europe, has just been recalled by the new Shah to take over the reins of government, is a proof of how a Minister also may modify the absolute power of the Shah.

Amin-es-Sultan had rendered himself so indispensable, and had such a powerful backing (he had placed all the chief offices of the Government in the hands of his creatures), that for a time he was the virtual sovereign of Persia.

Such an example may also be found among the governors of the provinces. These governors recall in many ways the satraps of ancient Persia. The Shah nominates them, generally according to the sum

of money they can offer him for the post. When he is in want of money, he does not hesitate to accept the sum offered him by the first comer, in exchange for a nomination to the governorship of a province. But often the existing holder sends him a greater present or a larger sum of money in order to be retained in his position. The Shah keeps both.

However, sometimes a governor succeeds in acquiring so strong a position that the Shah sees himself obliged to let him alone.

Amir Nizam was an example of this, and the Shah had to reckon with him *à plus forte raison* the Crown Prince. When he was Governor of Azerbaijan, acting for the Crown Prince, who held the title, and was in residence in that province, he showed his power by defeating the wishes of the Shah's son.

Amir Nizam attached great importance to getting rid of a certain criminal, who merited exemplary chastisement, and who several times, at the head of a few desperadoes of his tribe, had caused grave troubles in the savage and mountainous districts of the Karadagh.

* Mahmoud Beg and his men were notorious highway-men: they had been pillaging Christian villages, whose priest they had assassinated. The priest belonged to an old family well known among the Christians of the Azerbaijan, and had left a moderate fortune to his heirs, which gave them the means of making friends in the entourage of the Amir.

They did their work so effectively, spurred by the idea of vengeance so characteristic of Orientals, that they obtained a sentence of death against the culprit.

In Persia justice is often magnanimous to the Mussulman who has assassinated a Christian. But these murders were becoming too frequent. Mahmoud Beg was too notorious, and, on the other side, the money of the dead priest, spread liberally, and perhaps other considerations also, determined the Governor of Azerbaijan to make an example. He decided, therefore, that the brigand should be fastened to the mouth of a gun and "blown," as the Persians say in their picturesque way.

The sentence was presented to the Vali-Ahd (the Crown Prince), who at that time was courting popularity by playing the rôle of the merciful and magnanimous prince in opposition to the sanguinary and inexorable Amir.

The Vali-Ahd observed that though he did not disapprove of the energetic measures of the governor, and in spite of the horrible nature of the crime, that it would be well to show mercy, for the motives of his crime might have been more excusable than the Amir had thought. A courtier present, who, like the majority of the entourage of the Vali-Ahd, hated the Amir for his power and the scant attention he paid to them, kept on saying, "And he is a good Mussulman."

The Vali-Ahd insisted that it was wrong for the blood

of an infidel to be ransomed with the blood of a true believer. What would the people, and above all the *Mollahs*, think?

The courtiers raised a chorus of approval of the mercifulness of their master.

Upon that the Amir made his salaam and withdrew without offering a word, but did not change the order to the executioner.

That day he did not go out of his palace, and was walking nervously in his garden with his Italian doctor, who knew nothing of what was going on. He looked at his watch very often, when suddenly the report of a gun was heard. He breathed a sigh of relief, and at the same moment something fell beside them. Amir Nizam went and poked it with his stick to find out what it was. It was the heart, still moving, of the chief who had been blown from the mouth of a gun.

This was common talk in Tabriz, where it happened.

This strong action on the part of Amir Nizam against the Crown Prince's wishes so thunderstruck the latter that he dared not say anything.

The chiefs of the tribes may also defy the authority of the Shah when they feel themselves strong enough and are far enough away.

They act in the most practical way: they refuse to pay the taxes till the Shah sends troops; and sometimes they defeat these troops, and stripping them of

their rifles and clothes, send them back to the Shah full of shame.

The Shadow of Allah, the Sublime Sovereign whose standard is the Sun, and his Splendour that of the Firmament, is not like the Sultan of Turkey, the religious chief of his country. The power of the clergy often brings him to his knees.

But there is one point in which his authority is never disputed—in the distribution of titles. He sells them generally, but sometimes gives them in recompense for services.

The title of Khan is already ordinary, and is becoming more and more so. Everybody who has done the Government any kind of a service receives it, or takes it without it being offered.

That of Sultan, unique amongst the Sunnites, is given, to annoy them, to simple captains in Persia.

Grandeess obtain titles for their sons when they are quite young; the titles are changed later according to the importance of the person.

Every rich Persian buys a title, even if he is a tradesman; for example, Malik-i-toujar, which means Prince of the Merchants.

Titles are not hereditary in Persia, but princes of the Imperial Family have a title from their birth, such as Light of the Empire or Shadow of the King.

The Persians have no standard titles, such as duke, marquis, earl, or count, viscount, and baron. They have special titles created for them. Typical civilian

titles are: Eye of the Kingdom, Sun of the State, Key of the Empire, Column of the Empire; and typical military titles are: Saviour of the Empire, Glory of the State.

The Shah, to emphasise his power, likes to surround himself with a number of viziers. There is a vizier of everything, from the Vizier of War to the Vizier of Royal Constructions. There is a Vizier of Finances, a Vizier of Foreign Affairs, a Vizier of Beasts of Burden, who has under his direction all the mules, asses, and camels of the Government; a Vizier of Ceremonies, a Vizier of Customs, who is European; a Councillor of the Navy, an Englishman, who, from Teheran, is supposed to keep an eye upon the single battleship yacht of the Persian Navy.

There is also a Vizier of Mines, although none of the Persian mines are exploited with the exception of those of turquoises and a small one of coal, belonging to the Vizier of Public Instruction.

The more numerous the viziers who surround the Shah, the more powerful he feels himself to be. But in reality all the strings of the State are in the hands of the Grand Vizier. He has to control everything, from the treaties with foreign powers to the smallest details of administration. Everything is submitted to him, but naturally little attracts his attention; that is why one has resource to bribery towards him, or to influences, even that of his harem, to attract his attention upon certain things. In the middle of a Council of State he may



Weighing Tax money before the Viziers.

be disturbed to administer justice between two street porters who have been quarrelling.

He is the only one who governs. This centralisation, exceeding human strength, can be only detrimental to the country ; so much so, that in order not to lose his position, he has to keep an eye on the Shah, to prevent plots against himself. He accompanies His Majesty on his travels, his hunting parties, etc.

The Grand Vizier is the busiest man in the kingdom ; it is right, in return, that he should be the best paid. His appointments have, in fact, no end. He receives presents from all parts of the country, and has a finger in everything, which always comes out gilded.

The governors of the provinces, though nominated by the Shah, have to deal with the Grand Vizier—rather indirectly, for they are all-powerful in their provinces. They can condemn to death and execute all those who are comprised in their administrations without reference to the central Government.

They send the taxes to the Shah through the medium of the Grand Vizier, but levy them as they choose and as often as they choose. They may do it three or four times, if not more, in the year at their pleasure, or, more strictly speaking, according to their power.

There are two sorts of taxes in Persia : the *malliat*, corresponding to our regular taxes, which comprises a land tax of a fifth of the produce ; a sort of octroi upon merchandise and import and export duties ; and the *Sadir*, an extraordinary tax for special occasions.

Under the governor—called in Persian *Hakem*—is the *Naib-el-Houkouma* or lieutenant-governor. Then come the *Kalantar* or mayors; then the *Kedkhoda* or chiefs of wards or parishes, if in a town, or the headsman of villages. The *Daroga* is the chief of police.

All these functionaries have authority over taxes, offences, crimes, under the custom-law called *Ourf*.

Questions of property, inheritance, marriage, divorce, etc., are decided by the written law called *Shara*, based upon the Koran, and the *Sonna* or tradition. This is in the hands of the *Mollahs*, and presided over by the *Imam-Jomeh*.

In the villages the *Khazi* (the Kadis of the *Arabian Nights*) are the only enforcers of the written law.

It is unnecessary to say that the law is very arbitrary, and that justice is given in favour of the most powerful or the one who will pay most.

There are a thousand “Chinesities” in the law, amongst them that called *dast-guerdan*, an instance of which was given to me by Mirza Ali Akbar.

When he bought his garden for sixty tomans, he went with the seller to the *Hakem-Shara*—the doctor of the law. There, as he had not the entire sum in ready money, though it was due to him a little later, he put into the hand of the seller the five tomans which he had brought with him for that purpose; then he borrowed this very five tomans from the seller and gave them back to him again as the price of the garden: he borrowed and gave them eleven times running, saying

to him, "I give you this money for the price of the land." To which the seller answered eleven times, "I lent you five tomans." In this way the Mirza had given sixty tomans to the seller, and had become proprietor of the garden, and the contract of sale was notified by the *Hakem-Shara*. At the same time he had contracted a loan of fifty-five tomans, payable at intervals agreed upon, which gave rise to a new contract of quite a different order. This is only an Oriental form of mortgage.

Coming to the subject of punishments, the first to be described is the *bastinado*—the most ordinary sentence in Persia. To inflict the *bastinado*, the following implements are used: (1) A *fellek*, a sort of pole, eight feet long, with handles at each end and a cord in the middle, fastened in two places about half a yard apart, through which the feet of the victim are passed, when it is twisted to the requisite tightness. (2) The *choub*, which means wood, is a willow rod about six feet long and rather thicker than the thumb. They are kept in bunches in the tank of the courtyard to render them tough and supple so that they may not break easily.

The condemnation may either be for so many strokes, or till so many *choub* are broken, which makes all the difference, for a *choub* generally lasts three or four strokes. The sentence is seldom for less than fifty *choub*. But for a severe punishment a favourite number is a thousand and one. In that case death may super-

vene, and in any case the culprit is confined to his bed for several months.

After the fifty or hundred strokes, which is the ordinary sentence, the victim can generally walk in two or three days. It does not break any bones, but makes the feet swell to three or four times their size, and bleed profusely.

This *fellek* and *choub* are always ready, not only in the house of each governor and judge, but of every important personage. Nearly everybody has a right to inflict the bastinado, and everybody has received or will receive it, from the Grand Vizier to the lowest camel-driver.

When two people are condemned together, one foot of each is put into the *fellek*.

When men are condemned, they commence taking off their shoes themselves, lie on their backs on the ground, and hold up their feet to be fastened in the *fellek*.

As soon as the strokes descend, they scream for mercy—*Aman! Aman!* (mercy). The judge very often stops the punishment to say, "Confess your crime, and you will only receive the proper punishment; but if you do not confess, you will first be beaten till you do confess, and then receive the punishment that you merit." This argument generally decides the victim to confess, even when he is not guilty.

Then the *choub*s begin to fall again on the soles of his feet, and between his shouts he promises the

ferrashes (executioners) so much money if the blows are caught by the *fellek*. But they strike the feet until they extort the promise of the sum they demand. Then they strike on the *fellek*, and occasionally on the feet. In order not to attract the attention of the judge, the man shrieks louder than ever.

Torture is also used to extort the confession of crimes. Many of the tortures cannot be described in these pages. Roasting the feet over a brazier, the favourite punishment of the Inquisitors in Spain, is one of the mildest.

After the bastinado, the most ordinary punishment is to cut off the nose and the ears. If you see a man of the lower class wearing a turban down to the neck, you may be sure that he has lost them.

Thieves have a hand cut off, and if they repeat the offence they lose the other hand. If the head does not fall at the third offence, anyhow a foot will go.

Capital punishment in Persia is generally inflicted by cutting the throat. Hanging is rare. There is an engaging simplicity about a Persian execution. It takes place in the public square. The prisoner is brought with a heavy chain on his neck and his hands. While the executioner sharpens his curved knife, a pipe is handed to the prisoner, who smokes it with Oriental fatalism. When the chain is taken off his neck, the prisoner kneels with his back to the executioner, who takes him by the upturned chin and draws his knife across the taut throat. If the knife does not cut well,

after the first stroke the executioner leaves the person half killed to sharpen it.

The body is left lying on the ground. The family and friends come to take it away, and have to pay a fee to the executioner, who only pauses to take the chains off the body.

Nobody pays much attention to an execution in Persia, unless the culprit is notorious. It is considered an unimportant thing.

On the day of the execution the executioner goes about the bazar and levies a fee of one or two pence on the merchants for doing them the service of ridding them of a dangerous person.

The Persians have recourse, more or less, to all the punishments that human ingenuity has invented. They even crucify occasionally, though the victim is nailed to a wall instead of to a cross.

The condemned, if they are important, are blown from the mouth of guns.

Another punishment is to bury a person up to his neck in wet slime, which, when it dries, contracts and gradually crushes him, one of the most terrible of all deaths, worse than the walling up, which was the fate in the Middle Ages of nuns unfaithful to their vows.

Walling up is used for making examples.

At the gates of towns may be seen pillars of brick about the height of a man, with domed tops. It is in these that the victims are walled up. They may be

heard calling for water, though generally the pillars are supposed to have their hollows filled up with earth so that the victims cannot move, and die quickly.

Punishments have to be condign and exemplary in Persia, where instincts are very primitive and unrestrained.

The Persians are capable of being very cruel, especially in the uneducated classes. They sometimes leave the old women to die unheeded.

A Russian resident in Teheran saw in a street near his house a little negro slave about fourteen years old, worn to a skeleton, lying in the arch of an uninhabited house. He sent his servant to inquire and give help to the poor little wretch. The servant came back saying that the case was hopeless; that he was the slave of a neighbour, and was in an advanced stage of consumption, so he was being allowed to die in peace. Allah would provide for him. He then went himself, and put some silver in the boy's hand, and took him some hot milk to revive him. The boy was too feeble to drink it, or even to express his thanks. The kindly Russian gave orders for the boy to be removed to a hospital, and promised to pay the expenses, to the absolute astonishment of the bystanders. The boy was removed, but it is to be feared not to the hospital, because no demand for money ever reached the generous foreigner.

The Persians are naturally no kinder to beasts, which are left to die on the spot where they break down. They do not even cut their throats, much less waste a cartridge

on them to shorten their sufferings. I have often come across dying camels or asses on the roads.

Although the Persian rivals even the Chinese in his moments of cruelty, it must not be imagined that cruelty is anything like so general in the land of Hafiz and Sa'di. And the new generation has a distinct inclination to clemency.

Mirza Ali Akbar did not care to talk much about politics, but on a few occasions he broke through his rule, and the following is the gist of one of his conversations on the state of his country :—

“It is sad to see Persia falling into an anarchy which will make it sink into the hands of the Russians and the English.

“The feebleness and good-nature of the Shah form one of the principal causes of this decadence. He is surrounded by courtiers who are for the most part Turks from Azerbeijan, who, thinking only of their personal advantage, divert Muzaffer-ed-din from his royal duties.

“After having led him into debauchery to weaken him and make themselves indispensable, either as a doctor, like Hakim-ul-Mulk, or as a buffoon, like several others, they have given him the habit of opium-smoking.

“Lately, at the review of Cossacks, did you notice how changed he looked? He seemed thinner and older; his face had shrunk, and in spite of the jewels covering his uniform, and of his imperious air, he gave an impression of sadness.

“This year has been disastrous for Persia—no water, no bread, no money. The wheat has been ‘cornered’ by rich courtiers, so powerful that the Shah does not dare to make them disgorge. At this time last year its price was nine *tomans* and a half or ten *tomans* the *Khalvar*. This year it costs eighteen or nineteen *tomans* the *Khalvar*. The barley, which was sold ten years ago at from nine to eleven *krans* the *Khalvar*, and had mounted to five *tomans* the *Khalvar* last year, fetches to-day twelve *tomans*; and all these prices will augment considerably during the winter.

“Life is becoming very difficult in Teheran. There are continual riots in the bazars. When the Shah went there recently, he was groaned. Last week he found under his pillow the following warning: ‘If your Majesty has not restored the affairs of the State to the condition in which they were in your father’s reign before the sacred month of Ramazan, a Reza (the name of the assassin of Nasr-ed-din) will come to do justice upon you in the name of the people of Iran.’

“All this indicates that the people have reached the limits of their patience. The officials and the army, whose salaries have not been paid for the last eighteen months, are exasperated. The last straw at which the Shah can clutch would be a foreign loan, by which the finance could be restored all round.”

Since then the situation has not changed except for the worse, though a young Shah has succeeded to the throne, and Persia has received the Pandora’s box of

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Parliamentary Institutions. Much water will run into the Araxes, and very like much blood also, before Persia gets a good government, and she will be happy if only Russia and England arrange these blessings for her, and not marauding Germany as well.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FATE OF REFORMS IN PERSIA

FOLLOWING the good advice of Foreign Ministers who pointed out to him the faults in the administration of the provinces, the Shah tried to have governors who would conform with European ideas and not over-tax or ill-treat the inhabitants of their provinces. He chose from among his courtiers a man who had been educated in Europe and was favourable to these ideas. But no one in the province to which he was sent understood what a blessing it was ; they only despised him for his weakness. The result was that not a fourth of the taxes could be raised. Crimes increased ; as he was unwilling to have recourse to cruelty, he had to resign his post.

They actually robbed him when he was on his return to Teheran.

The Shah was quite determined to take his revenge on the inhabitants of that province, and sent them as governor the most reactionary and violent of his officers.

Hardly had he arrived before the bastinado was in full swing. He had the taxes paid twice in the first month, and sundry recalcitrants blown from the mouths

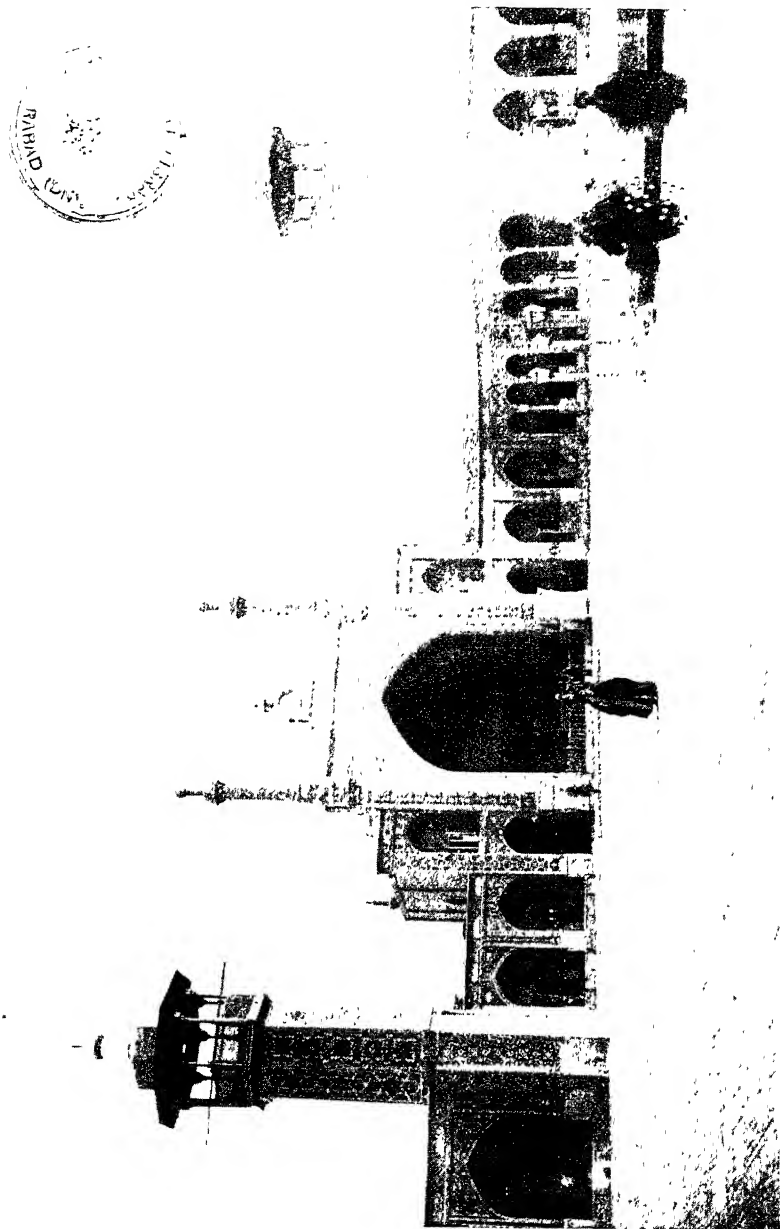
of guns, so that he made quite a name all round. The same people who had despised his just and kind-hearted predecessor so much that they called him a woman, admired the new-comer, whom they dreaded, and said, "At last we have a lion."

As an instance of the arbitrariness to which the Persian populace is accustomed to submit, I may mention the governor who had some people bastinadoed because they had been walking in the bazars without treading the backs of their slippers under their heels.

All this shows that the Persian people are not yet quite ripe for Parliamentary Institutions, and other "blessings of civilisation."

Another still-born attempt at introducing Occidental ideas was the establishment of the Persian *Patrie*.

When Nasr-ed-din Shah came back from his first voyage in Europe, he was full of projects of reform; the one which interested him particularly was the propagation of ideas by the means of the Press. He was very fond of the European papers; every day one of his viziers had to read them to him. So, in order to have a well-edited and interesting paper, he thought the best way would be to put it under European direction. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had an editor sent from Paris, and the paper was to be Franco-Persian, French being the only European language used by the Persians. The name chosen was *La Patrie*, something quite new to Persia, where the idea of *patrie* does not exist.



Courtyard of the Mosque of Koum.

When the French director arrived in Teheran, he was told to act as he would in France. The "extremely liberal ideas" of His Majesty were vaunted to him, and his desire to Europeanise his kingdom. The Frenchman a republican, totally ignorant of Persian ways, took this for plain truth, and wrote his leader in accordance with it. The first number of *La Patrie* was printed on the 5th of February 1876, a historical date without any to-morrow.

"To our Readers and Confrères.

"We have obtained from the Imperial Government of His Majesty the Shah the authorisation to publish a Franco-Persian paper, and in delivering to the public this first number, we feel the need to let him know the line of conduct that we intend to follow, and from which we shall not desist.

"Persia was till now deprived of a serious organ which could properly make it known and, if wanted, to help it in foreign countries.

"Our confrère the *Iran*, the official paper of the Government, has indeed rendered many services; but, written only in Persian, it is little spread and little known out of Persia.

"We intend to fulfil this first lacune in making known to our confrères of Europe all the grave political questions or those of general interest relating to Persia.

"We shall be very happy every time they will give us the occasion to discuss with them, and if 'from the

clash of ideas must flow light,' we hope that it will be done in Persia. We pray then the European Press to allow us to sit with it at the intellectual banquet of Thought and discussion. We solicit the humblest place ; it is the one which is proper for us. We are young, but we ask only to profit by the experience, the wisdom, of our European predecessors, and to make its benefits spurt over Persia.

"As to the internal (interior) affairs, we shall speak of them with the most absolute independence : we have no party, and do not want to have any ; we want to serve the country in showing it its true needs. We shall support progress ; every time that it manifests itself, we shall help it by our encouragement, *but we shall never be vile flatterers. We shall not burn incense to power ; we shall defend every just cause and blame every reprehensible act.*

"We shall support the power which represents law to us ; *but if its acts are contrary to law, we shall blame them the more severely.* We shall never interfere with private life ; not only we shall be neutral, but also completely blind on that subject ; *we shall criticise the acts injurious (noxious) to the general interests of the country.*

"*War then upon abuses and those who commit them !* Respect religion, respect the Sovereign ! Progress, justice, equity : this is our device, this is our programme.

"*Patrie* is the name that we have chosen for our paper, patriotism being the first civic virtue of a nation. In Persia it embraces hardly more than the natal district :

true patriotism must also include love of the Sovereign, of laws, institutions, and Government of the country. 'To every noble heart his Fatherland is dear,' says a French author; may we use the prestige of our name to be welcomed by our readers. We shall devote all our cares to merit popular favour, in constituting ourselves everywhere, and on every occasion, the champion of the rights of the country and of the people."

There was never any second number, nor could the editor be allowed to remain in the country. At the expense of three years' salary to the Shah, he left for Europe at once.

Another prize fiasco was the Tobacco Concession, which not only fell through, but nearly dragged down the Kajar dynasty in its train.

On the 20th of Rajeb 1307—the 21st of March 1890—a treaty was signed between the Persian Government and an English syndicate, by which the Government conceded the monopoly of the exportation of tobaccos in all Persia for the annual payment of fifteen thousand pounds and the promise to give the Government beyond that what they used to receive in taxes on the tobacco. More than a hundred thousand pounds of backsheesh had to be distributed.

A few months after, a quantity of English and Levantine employees arrived in Persia, with airs of conquest which gave great displeasure to the natives, and a few disturbances arose. The priests, under-

standing the advantage they could derive from it, fanned the flame. They were very likely helped in that by the Russians, who were disagreeably affected by the important concession being awarded to their chief rivals in Persia.

The first reason given by the priests was the impurity of the tobacco on account of its having passed through the hands of infidels; and the Moujtehid of Kerbela, the most influential priest in Persia, who resides on the Turkish territory, forbade the use of tobacco. He wrote to the Shah that selling to Christians privileges which belonged to Mussulmans was contrary to the Koran; and, curiously enough, all Persians refrained from smoking. All the tobacco shops were shut. Everybody obeyed: if anyone had been seen smoking, he would have been mobbed.

The Shah, frightened, and influenced by Russia, promised to take back the concession as soon as the indemnity to recompense the company could be fixed. He hoped that temporising would be a remedy. And as there was a revolt in Tabriz, and the palace of the Crown Prince was threatened, he ordered that all the functionaries of the company in Azerbeijan should be Persians. Ispahan and Shiraz began to move also, but they received only good words. The Government expected that after a little time had passed they would become reconciled to the idea, and submit to the *fait accompli*.

In a place called Kelardesht, a Seyyed, who gave

himself the name of Alamghir—Conqueror of the World—preached rebellion, and succeeded in raising a few hundred followers. It appeared more formidable than it really was, for when the Shah sent some troops the rebels were easily captured.

But in Teheran one was on the *qui vive*. The Shah quitted the town to go to a hunting box, and left the Grand Vizier alone. The governor of the town had all the doors of the palace walled up except one or two. But still the company was ready to buy the tobacco. A few growers sent in their crops, but some rich merchants deliberately burnt theirs in the public square rather than give it to the hated foreigner. Still there was not a man to be seen smoking, and the firm attitude of the population very much astonished the European representatives, who did not expect so much from the weak character of the Persians. The Minister of Great Britain was the very first to advise the company to surrender the concession. Meetings were organised for discussing the indemnity. A Persian dared to say, in the presence of the Grand Vizier, that first of all those who had received backsheesh must hand it in as a contribution to the indemnity. And one morning Europeans found on the walls of their quarter posters threatening them with death if in two days' time the concession was not cancelled. This impressed the Shah, who put up other posters to this effect: "Out of love of my people, I cancel the concession."

Soon after, he received congratulations from the

clergy, and especially from the Moujtehid of Kerbela, who added that it would be wise and to the advantage of religion to take away from the defiling hands of Europeans all concessions. This made the Shah and the Government very furious; and in the desire to appear energetic, he sent an order to the Moujtehid Ashtiani of Teheran to smoke, in order to set an example to the inhabitants, or, in default of that, to go into exile instantly. Ashtiani chose exile, and contrived that everybody should know it immediately, and some of his people went into the bazars and fomented a disturbance. In a moment the rioters were marching on the palace. They began by throwing stones at the palace of Naib-es-Saltaneh, next to the Shah's, which was surrounded by troops. They were commencing to attack the Shah's palace, to which His Majesty had returned the day before, when the officer who was in command of the troops lost his head, and gave the command to fire. Three volleys were fired, and seven people were killed, and nearly thirty wounded. That was enough to make everybody fly. Meanwhile Europeans were very much alarmed. Two of them, who were in the bazars, owed their lives to the protection of some natives. One was nailed up in a packing-case and was rescued in the middle of the night; the other was disguised as a Persian woman. The disguise saved his life; for in it he was able to cross the streets to the European quarter.

On the day after, as the Europeans expected to be

massacred, the director of the company asked all those who wished, to come and take refuge in the huge building of the company, in order to sell their lives dearly, and many went there. There was a big lunch, which was called the *Lunch of the Massacre*. They expected, for their dessert, to have their heads cut off. But nothing happened, and everybody went home unmolested.

The Moujtehid Ashtiani had neither smoked nor departed. He gave as an excuse that the mob would let him go only on the condition that the Shah tear up in their presence the original contract of the concession, which he asked the Shah to send to him. The answer of the Shah was that he could remain, and at the same time the bearer brought him a diamond ring. But Ashtiani accepted that present only when he learned of the dissolution of the company, announced by the poster of the director himself, who at the same time asked the people who had sold the tobacco to him to come back and take it away.

A little time after, the public crier announced in the streets and the bazars that the Moujtehid of Kerbela had removed the prohibition on smoking, which was a great relief. One heard again in the streets the cries of the *Kalyan-frouch*—the men who carry about tobacco and pipes, light them, and, for a trifle, hire them out to you to be smoked.

An agreement was afterwards come to between the Persian Government and the English Legation, by which,

after a delay of four months, the sum of five hundred thousand pounds was to be paid to the company. And so, what at one time appeared likely to be an affair of importance, quietly ended.

The *vox populi* has not the weight of the *vox dei* in Persia. It is generally condemned to the silence which means consent.

In order to know the opinion of his subjects on their governors, the late Shah had letter-boxes put up in the principal squares of each town. These boxes were sealed, in order that they could only be opened in his presence. The people were invited to put in them any complaint they had to make. But this experiment had no effect, for the governors used to put two sentinels on each side of the box with whips, and if anyone had the idea of posting a letter to the Shah, he was whipped away.

The new Shah, Mohammed Ali, has had recourse to a more modern means. He has established a telephone cabin in the Meidan-i-Toup-Khaneh in Teheran, and anybody who has a complaint to make to him may ring him up. But the chances are that the telephone will share the fate of the pillar-box.

CHAPTER XXIII

BAZARS—I

SHOEMAKERS—TOBACCONISTS AND PROVISION DEALERS

THE bazars in the East being the centre of active life, it was there that I used to go most with the Mirza, to gather Persian impressions.

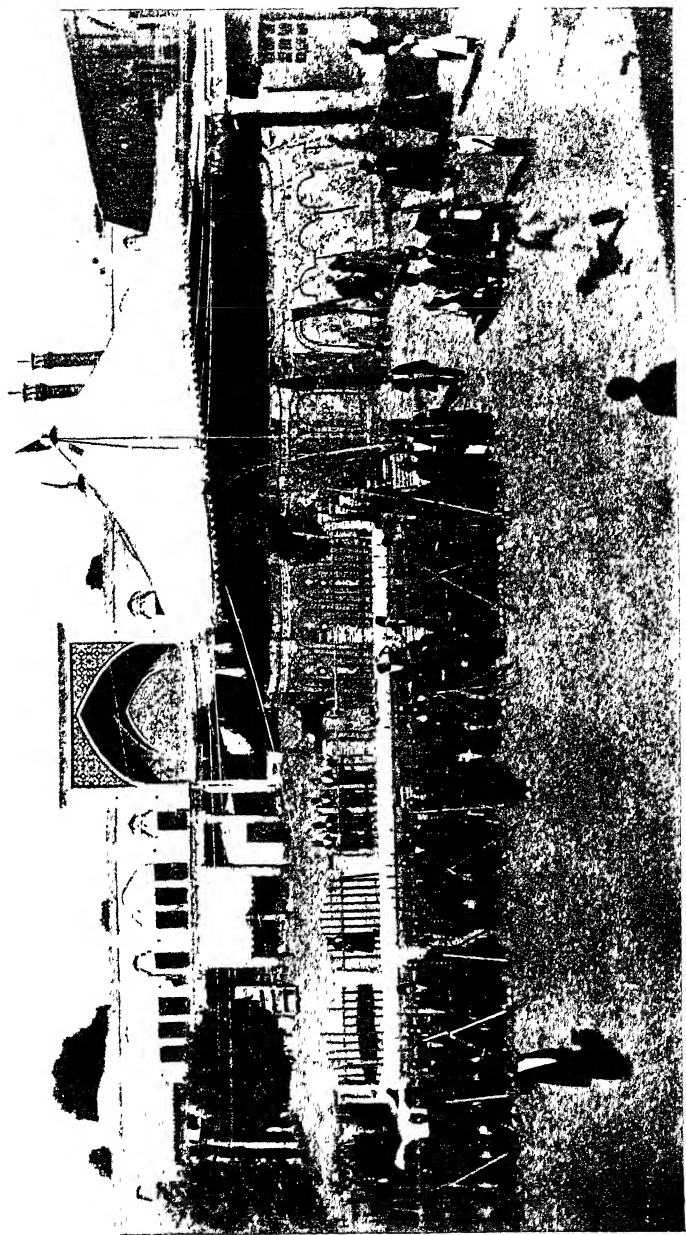
Like the bazars in Constantinople and Cairo, those of Teheran consist of an immense labyrinth of streets covered with brick vaults, forming an uninterrupted row of little domes, in the middle of each of which a round hole is pierced to let in the light. Through this hole the sun darts its rays like the flash-light of a man-of-war amid the half-lights of the vaults, which in summer keep the air so cool.

When you enter the great central artery, which starts from the south of the Sabz-Meidan, you are in the Bazar of the Shoemakers. On both sides of the vault are stalls, from ten to fifteen feet square, with a floor about three feet above the ground. These are occupied by the makers of all sorts of shoes. Here are *pahpoush*, yellow, or green for the *Mollahs*; there are the tiny red slippers with turned-up toes and metal

heels which the women wear. Farther on are the ugly boots of blacking leather or patent leather with elastic sides which are intended for those who wish to enjoy the advantages of civilisation. Then come the shops where you buy the *giveh*, the national shoes of Persia, made of very strong white linen, with soles of plaited thongs dyed green; and the yellow top-boots, with the red rolled-over tops and very turned-up toes and thick soles, like Tartar boots, which are worn by the Persians in the mountains.

Nothing used to amuse me more than the diversity of types we met in the bazar. All the types and all the costumes of Central and Western Asia elbow each other here in the most extraordinary medley.

The first thing I saw in the bazars, riding a mule, was a venerable Moujtehid, in a close-rolled white turban of a thousand little folds, wound round and round a pointed conical cap. He was accompanied by a numerous suite of *Mollahs*, who wore turbans too, but not with the same elaborate coils, because these are reserved for the highest ranks of the priesthood; of Seyyeds, with dark blue turbans, or green, if they were hadji (pilgrims), as well as descendants of the Prophet, all of them wearing long flowing robes, belted in at the waist by a Cashmere shawl in which the calamdan and the roll of paper appear which are the badge of men of letters. The crowd made deep bows to the Moujtehid, and many of them kissed the hem of his garment. He looked at them with con-



Sabz-Meidan—a square in the Bazar.

descension, but with a distracted attention, for his eyes seemed to be regarding in the visionary distance the series of the Seven Heavens promised in the Koran. The Persian is very theatrical; he always likes to look his part. If he is a general, he is Bombastes; if he is a judge, he is Rhadamanthus.

Then came an Armenian in a low kolah, with clothes which he imagined to be European. He was careful not to brush the Mussulmans, knowing that they would curse him if he polluted them with his impure touch.

The men with flashing eyes and moustaches like a walrus's, wearing a sort of bolero made of plaited foals' hair, and a round white cap encircled with striped silk, whose fringe fell over their faces, were merchants from Kurdistan. Their rifles, slung over their right shoulders, and bandoliers full of cartridges, showed that even Mercury could not go out without being armed in their "charming" country.

The man with a square beard, with a blue and white striped cloth on his head, held in its place by a crown of camel's hair cords with gold knobs, was a merchant of Baghdad; he was positively glittering in his sky-blue *abba* with golden stripes like sun-rays. As he passed by the Orthodox Persians cursed him, for he was a Sunnite, and his dress was like the one that the assassins of Kassem wear in the religious processions of Moharrem. The young negro who followed him was a Somali slave that he was probably oing to sell.

Then came a water-carrier, dressed in nothing but a dirty shirt, bowed down by the weight of his goat-skin full of water, which swayed about on his back. He held in his left hand one of the legs of the skin, which is the tap through which he draws the water, and in his right a brass cup engraved with sentences from the Koran and verses of poetry, reciting the praises of the liquid that he was selling. He was watering the front of a shop.

There were interminable files of black phantoms gliding from shop to shop, bargaining noiselessly, and disappearing like shadows. This is all that one sees of the fair sex, with the exception of a few Armenian women, half-veiled, with round caps of embroidered velvet on the tops of their heads, from which fall a quantity of plaits, concealed in the folds of the *chader*, which they wear like their Mussulman congeners.

Horsemen were riding about, and there were strings of little grey donkeys loaded with bricks for building, and interminable caravans of camels with deafening bells. Their heads, ornamented with tufts of red, green, and yellow, were balanced in a bored and supercilious sort of way on the top of their long swans' necks, encircled with collars of red leather ornamented with little white cowries. Their india-rubber-like feet flattened out as they touched the ground with the regularity of a clock; the loads hanging from each side of their humps, swaying and

knocking against the walls, were a perpetual menace for the foot passenger. Suddenly there was a pandemonium: two caravans coming in opposite directions had met. The camel-drivers shouted to make their beasts give way to each other, but in vain; for the beasts were locked together as their loads caught, and dashed the foot passengers into the walls. The cries of fury and the oaths of the camel-drivers were blended with the growling of the camels, the yells of the people, and the howling of the dogs which were run over, and the screams of the frightened women.

The entire traffic was suspended, and it took more than half an hour to re-establish order. This incident, during which the Mirza and I took refuge in a shop in order not to be crushed, gave me the opportunity of bargaining for a pair of exquisite little *pahpoush* of gazelle skin, embroidered with golden palms and mother-of-pearl dates. One of these was still in the hands of the workmen. The merchant asked a ridiculous price, as if the pearls had been real; and to give them more value in my eyes, he assured me that they belonged to one of those mysterious phantoms whom fear had driven into the corner of his shop, and who, he said, was a *Khanoum* (i.e. lady) of importance. The Mirza drew my attention to a *chader* of black silk fringed with gold lace in the middle of some cotton *chaders*. Who knows? it might have been a princess shopping with her maids. How

exciting it would have been to have carried off the *pahpoush* of the trembling phantom, who, seated in that corner, looked like a half-filled balloon in the middle of other half-filled balloons. All sorts of ideas passed through my mind: I had visions of a Cinderella of the "Thousand and One Nights," or else perhaps this mignon slipper that I was holding in my hand had been used by the lady to chastise her unfaithful husband, for the heel of the *pahpoush* is a favourite weapon in the harem.

But the Mirza frowned at me, and I understood that all this was the Eternal Persian Mirage, and must go the way of all mirages. . . . So I ran away laughing.

We passed through the bazar of *kalyans*, *chibouks*, and other pipes, which was crowded with pilgrims from Kashgar, easily recognisable by their high cheek-bones and narrow eyes, laying in supplies for their journey to Mecca, and went to the Tobacco Bazar.

It is a very quiet place, full of the fragrance of nicotine. On the counters were bricks of amber-coloured tobacco, almost as closely pressed as wood—some a yard high and long and wide, some still sewn up in goat-skins. There were also beautiful long leaves of tobacco of Shiraz for the *kalyans*, and tobacco of Kachan, shredded into fine flakes like curls of fair hair, for making into cigarettes.

Flint and steel are still much used, but are being driven out by Japanese and Russian imitations of Swedish matches—the Japanese being incomparably better.

There was an attempt to start a match factory in Persia, but it failed.

Seeing some very beautiful leaves of tobacco for the *kalyan*, I asked the price, and was told a price which came to about two francs—four krans—the pound. I ordered two pounds.

“But you put your thumb on the scales!” I exclaimed, seeing that the merchant was cheating. He looked at me—there was a pause—and then he said, in the most unabashed way, “Do you imagine that I am going to give you tobacco of that fineness for four krans the pound if I did not put my thumb in the scale?”

I was so pleased to find a Persian so Persian, that I could do nothing but take the tobacco and add a little backsheesh to the price he asked.

From this bazar, in order to get to the Jewellers' Bazar, we made our way to the Provision Bazar. In this there were all sorts of smells, each more disagreeable than the last, so that it was no good trying to escape them. We passed fruit-sellers with most picturesque stalls, artistically arranged with the famous melons of Ispahan, whose flavour is renowned all over Western Asia; the grapes of Kasvin, and the peaches and apricots of Teheran. The peach is, as everyone knows, the Persian fruit; its name is derived from *Persica*, and though the trees are not trained in Persia with the same care as in Europe, the flavour of the fruit is so delightful that it deserves the honour. Huge pale yellow citrons

were ranged next to bursting pomegranates, while stalactites of cucumbers and necklaces of onions hung from the ceiling. On shelves were piled lettuces, mixed with pots of flowers and very often cages, golden-barred, in which the bulbul sang to the rose.

There was a crowd in front of a butcher's stall as we passed it. To my amazement, I saw that a man was hooked by his feet like a sheep. The Mirza explained to me that he had sold putrid meat, and that that was an ordinary punishment for this offence. In case of very grave offences, butchers have sometimes been cut up like carcasses, right down the middle.

A little farther on were the bakers' shops. They are very peculiar. First, you noticed the oven, which was built into one of the corners opening on the street; then the bread spread out in sheets upon sloping boards which reached from floor to roof.

Mirza Ali Akbar told me that during the last famine the bakers had been buying up and concealing the corn in order to send up the price. The governor of the town came in a fury with his *ferrashes* to the Bakers' Bazar, and, seeing all the stalls empty, asked the first baker why he had no bread out. The man made an unfortunate answer: "We have nothing to put in the ovens, your Excellency." "By the Shah's salt," answered the governor, turning to his *ferrashes*, "put him into the oven, and we shall see!" On the following day all the shops were, of course,

full of bread. That shows, added the Mirza, that energetic measures are the only kind to succeed in Persia.

There is no Milk Bazar, or Heaven knows what one might see there.

CHAPTER XXIV

BAZARS—II

FUNERALS—THE BAZAR OF THE BOOKSELLERS— MIRZA ALI AKBAR'S GARDEN

One day, as we were on our way to the Bazar of the Booksellers, to buy a few works that I wanted to translate, we saw a funeral approaching us.

The body, wrapped in precious fabrics, was carried by four men on their shoulders, upon a bier encircled with a low wooden balustrade. As it passed in front of us, all of a sudden Mirza Ali Akbar left me, and brusquely sprang at the bier. One of the bearers gave up his place to him, and he walked for a few yards very hurriedly, till another man took his place.

I waited for him, without being very much astonished at what he had done, for I knew that it was considered as a charitable act which brings good luck to give a lift to the dead.

However, I asked why the funeral went so quickly. "It is," said he, "in order not to keep the *Nekirin* waiting—*i.e.* the two angels, Nekir and Monkir, who interrogate the dead."

The conversation thus inspired, caused us to speak of death. And I learnt from him that already, during the agony of the dying, his bed is turned in such a way that his face should be directed towards the sanctuary of the Kaaba at Mecca, whilst the *Mollah*, who has come to his bedside, or anyone who is there, makes him pronounce the Mussulman profession of faith in Arabic: "There is no God but God; Mahomet is the prophet of God, and Ali his Veli."

As soon as the man is dead—or very likely only supposed to be so, for there is no certificate of death in Persia, nor any medical examination—the lamentations begin. All the family give heart-rending shrieks, and tear their clothes and put ashes on their heads, whilst a messenger is sent to fetch the washers of the dead, who come and take away the body to a house reserved for the purpose. There he is stripped of his clothes, and washed in three different waters—firstly, three times in plain water; secondly, three times in water infused with myrrh; and thirdly, three times in water infused with camphor, beginning at the head and ending at the feet.

The corpse is then re-dressed in a *Kafan*—*i.e.* garment of the dead—after the washers of the dead put, if he be a fully grown man, two thin wands of an ell's length under the armpits, in order that he may raise himself on them when he is interrogated by the *Nekirin*. The *Kafan* is made of pure white cotton or linen, and is composed of three pieces—a shirt, a cloth which

envelopes the head, and a winding sheet, which envelopes the whole body.

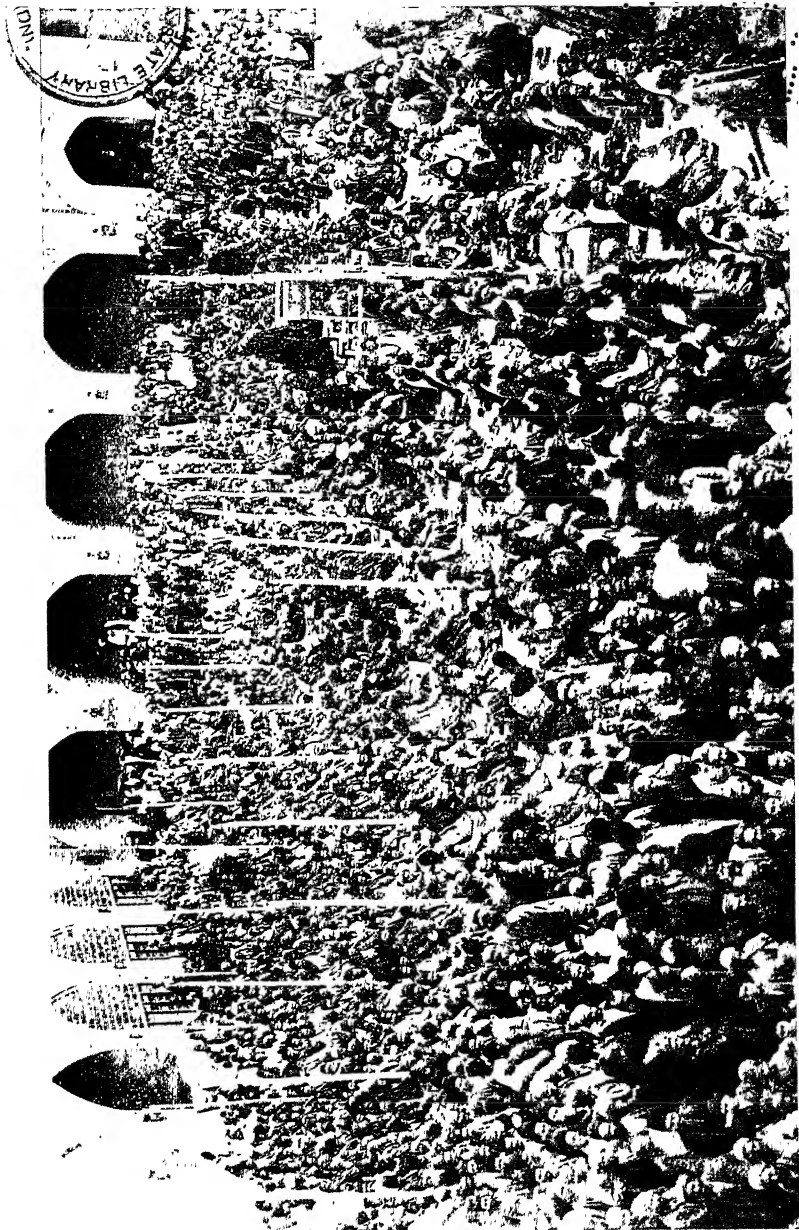
According to the amount of property of the dead, this *Kafan* is covered with stuff more or less precious. Then the corpse is taken to the cemetery. All this is done in great haste. The deceased is buried a few hours after his death. This is the reason why one hears so often in Persia of people coming to life again when they are supposed to be dead.

The only exceptions are a few grandees and very rich people, whose bodies are transported to a sacred place like Kum, Meshed, or Kerbela, a great expense, especially if they are taken to Kerbela, which is more than a month's journey by caravan from Teheran.

One may meet such a caravan on the road of Hamadan, with mules carrying a coffin on each side. The robbers lie in wait for them in the mountains of Kurdistan on the frontier of Turkey, to steal the presents to the shrine sent with them, or to rob the rich widows who accompany their departed spouses. It is in Kerbela that Muzaffer-ed-din Shah has ordered his body to be buried, in the sacred territory where Imam Houssein was assassinated.

During the progress to the cemetery, prayers are recited by a *Mollah*, who accompanies the funeral, with responses from all the company.

Arrived at the cemetery, where a grave has been dug, they place in it first of all a mat, upon which the body is lowered, its right side being turned towards the



Mollah preaching in a Mosque during the holy month of Moharrem.

Kaaba. Over the body, at about a foot and a half from the floor of the grave, a vault is built with stones, or planks are laid across, and then the hole is filled in with earth.

As soon as this human ceremony is ended, Nekir and Monkir, the two angels, who are of a most terrifying aspect, armed with flaming maces, make the grave blaze with their presence. By order of God the dead revives, and, raising himself on the two wands which have been placed under his armpits, sits up.

With a profound and threatening voice the *Nekirin* then demand of him, "What is thy religion?" If he answers, "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet, and Ali is his lieutenant," the angels bend over him and caress him. But if the answer is different, no matter if he speaks in the name of the Bible, the Talmud, or the Zend-Avesta, the *Nekirin* strike him dead with their maces, and put him in chains and drag him off to hell.

It is a custom that a third of the fortune left by the dead should be spent upon him. First there is the expense of his tomb, which may be a simple stone, more or less carved, but without any inscription, laid upon the earth where he reposes, with another stone, sometimes trefoil-headed, like ours, sometimes made in the shape of a shaft with a turban at the top, to indicate where the head lies; or it may be a mausoleum, with a cupola. Then there are the expenses of the mourning and fasting (by hired mourners), which lasts three days

or more; and then there are the expenses for the prayers, the fasting and the reading of the Koran (the whole or parts of it), and the pilgrimage to Meshed, Kerbela, or Mecca. For the prayers, the fasting, the Koran reading, and the pilgrimage, a certain sum of money is paid to persons who will pray, fast, read the Koran, and go on the pilgrimage; but all the benefits obtained by these meritorious actions will not accrue to them, they will accrue to the soul of the dead.

While we were discoursing about Death, we arrived at the Bazar of the Booksellers. It was like the covered-in yard of a caravanserai, with rooms opening on to balconies. It was as solemn as a mosque; venerable old men, peering into dusty books and wearing the old national dress, were talking to the shopkeepers in a whisper.

We sat on the mats in front of a shop, whose owner looked at me with less forbidding eyes than the others, and tea was brought to us. The Mirza began to talk in his most engaging way, whilst all the public round stared at us with unconcealed hostility. Valuable books were wrapped up in old stuffs, and it was in vain that I asked for them to be shown to me, for they were sacred books, and the fact of having them in my hands would have polluted them. I could not even procure a fine *Shahnameh* with illustrations. The only books that I could buy were a *Gulistan* of Sa'di, in manuscript of rather a bad hand, for good handwriting is so appreciated in Persia that its price is prohibitive.

A few lithographed books were on sale, some executed in Bombay, some in Constantinople or Cairo, but very few made in Teheran.

I bought also the popular *Tale of the Forty Parrots*, bound in leather, for one kran (about sixpence). It had very primitive illustrations.

As soon as we had completed our purchase in that sacred and inhospitable spot, the Mirza took me to his garden, which he had promised to show me. We drove to the Gate of Shimran, and in the plain, a few hundred yards from the city moat, he showed me a square enclosure with high mud walls. We alighted, and passed through a very small wooden door, neither heavy nor strong, and entered what the Mirza called his *bagcheh*. Like the Italians, many Persians have gardens outside the city, far from their houses, where they enjoy sitting in the shade and looking at flowers. The garden was still in the Land of Promise. The Mirza had planted some poplars about a yard high in very straight rows raying out from a round tank, which furnished all the water supply. The paths were marked out by stones picked up on the spot. The poplars looked like broom handles; hardly any of them gave any sign of recognition with leaves, because they had been planted so recently.

A few rose trees were planted here and there, covered with flowers, but the general aspect was arid and stony. In spite of that, the Mirza was immensely proud of this garden. It was the dream of his life

slowly taking shape. There was a little kiosk in the corner, made of mud, like the walls, and unpainted wood, with the front open except for a little trellis on which jasmine was trained.

We sat on a little carpet, and began to look at the books we had purchased.

I was most attracted by the funny, childish pictures of the *Tale of the Forty Parrots*, and we began to read it. It tells how "Once upon a time there was a very rich merchant of turquoises in Nishapur, who was not married. Everybody wondered, and asked him why. He explained that he dreaded making the experiment of a mother-in-law. One day an old woman came to him and said, 'I have exactly what you want—a girl, beautiful as the moon at the fourteenth night, with a figure like a cypress and tulip cheeks, who has no mother and no father, not even an aunt.'

"He agreed to marry her, and the old woman brought her to him. They were very happy. But a month after the marriage the merchant received the news that the price of turquoises had doubled in Tiflis. Seeing that there was a fresh fortune to be made, he prepared to make the journey, to sell his stock. The only question was, what should he do with regard to his young wife? He had no family himself, and he had married her because she had none. So he was in great trouble, when, walking in the bazar, he saw two beautiful talking parrots for sale. He bought them for his wife, to keep her company while he was away.

She liked them very much, as she heard their sweet talking.

“On the day of the departure of her husband she mounted to the roof to see him galloping away, and waved her veil until he had long disappeared over the horizon, and remained sad and pensive in her loneliness. Her heart was so dead to all things that she had not even the desire to breathe the scent of the rose.

“Suddenly a cloud of dust arose in the plain. Her curiosity was awakened, and when the cloud drew nearer, she perceived that it was the son of the Shah, riding with his falconers. He was as beautiful as the rising sun, and she nearly fainted. She took a little stone and threw it; the prince lifted up his head and saw that moon of beauty. He could think of nothing else but possessing her.

“When the night came, he sent an old woman to bid her to come to him; and the forgetful wife, quite excited at the idea of becoming the wife of the Shahzadeh, agreed to go, took her *chader*, enveloped herself in it, bound the *roukband* in front of her face, and was about to leave the house, when the parrots cried out to her, ‘Oh, mistress, where are you going in this way at night? Do you not fear the dangers of the streets?’

“‘Mind your own business!’ she answered angrily; and as the parrots kept on repeating their question, she took one of them and wrung its neck.

“Then she repented of her cruelty. The other parrot began to cry bitterly for the loss of her husband, so

Zarin-Taj—for that was the name of the lady—had to remain to console her, and said to the old woman, ‘I will go to-morrow night!’

“On the day after, as soon as the twilight was drawing in, the old woman knocked at the door again. Zarin-Taj, remembering her promise, took her *chader*, enveloped herself in it, bound the *rouhband* in front of her face, and was going to leave the house, when the parrot cried out to her as before, ‘Oh, mistress, where are you going in this way? Do you forget that it was on a night like this that a terrible fate happened to the fair Zeinab?’

“Zarin-Taj asked what Zeinab’s fate was, and the parrot began to tell a long story that lasted to the dawn.”

And the same thing happened for forty nights, till the return of the husband.

The scheme is that of the *Arabian Nights*. Each of these stories is a mixture of love and the marvellous adventures in which the childish Oriental mind delights.

We had not time to finish even the first chapter before it was time for me to go back to my dinner.

I drove home through lonely streets. In Persia there is none of that coming back to life in the streets at sunset which is such a feature in the non-Mohamedan countries of the South. All life is behind walls there.

CHAPTER XXV

BAZARS—III

AN OLD QUARTER OF THE CITY—HAMMAMS—CARAVAN-
SERAIS—THE BAZAR OF THE JEWELLERS

ON another day we went to the bazar, passing through the old town. It was spring-time: we had been riding outside the town, with Abd-Oullah, my servant, galloping behind us. We went first to the camp of the Cossacks, which is ravishing at this time of the year with its long, shady avenues intersected with streams running through grass and flowers, where during the heat of summer the Cossacks pitch their tents. The camp is in a sort of oasis in the middle of the stony desert which surrounds Teheran.

Coming back from there, we rode along the fortifications that Nasr-ed-din had built under the direction of a French engineer, in imitation of those of Paris. They are simply deep moats, whose earth is piled up in a high rampart on the inner side. These would not be very formidable in time of war, and could easily be captured by infantry. But in time of peace they are very useful to the custom-house officers of the city, for they compel

the caravans of goods to pass through the thirteen gates, whose pointed arches are surmounted by the slender minaret-like spires which make the entrances to the city of the Shah-in-Shah so imposing.

One must add that the smugglers find their way over these ramparts easily, owing to their tumble-down condition; in some places a whole caravan could pass them without difficulty.

After we had been round the ramparts, we entered by one of the southern gates, and rode through the narrow and monotonous streets of the old part of the town. The first quarter we came to was a very poor one, consisting of very low houses in a terribly ruinous condition. Ragged little boys were playing in the conduit, where, here and there, miserable women with hideous and wrinkled faces, which they took no trouble to conceal, were washing unrecognisable rags; whilst a little farther down others were filling their drinking vessels, without troubling to think about the washerwomen—the Persians believe that running water cannot be polluted. At our approach, crowds of children, women, and old men, all in rags, and one with a deformed leg, another with a deformed arm, surrounded our horses, which they frightened by their cries for charity and their brusque gestures, catching hold of our bundles, or the skirts of the Mirza's robes, in sign of supplication. The only means of getting rid of this noisy and starving crowd, who held out their emaciated hands, invoking the Imams, and even His Highness Issa (Jesus), in my honour, was to throw as

far as possible all the coins we had. They flew after them, and we took advantage of the scrambling on the ground and quarrelling of the crowd to spur our horses and gallop off.

But we could not gallop in the narrow Persian streets with impunity. Swarms of dogs, which we roused from their perpetual siesta (for the dogs in these poor quarters often have to fall back on the proverb, "Who sleeps dines"), sprang barking at our horses' heads and snapped at their legs. My horse reared, and nearly fell on me backwards; and the Mirza's horse had his hind legs bitten badly, and began to kick so hard that the poor Mirza was thrown; and as he was not at all a good horseman, it was impossible for me to persuade him to mount the nervous animal again. We had to give our horses to Abdoullah, telling him to lead them home, and continue our promenade on foot.

The streets were nearly deserted, for at that time of the day everybody is in the bazars. Occasionally we passed a few black phantoms, but mostly blue phantoms, for the women of the lower classes wear blue *chaders*. A fierce sun was beating down on the interminable succession of mud walls, and this trudge through streets neither levelled nor paved, with loose stones scattered about them, was very tiring.

In the middle of the street, about every hundred paces, there are square holes, which allow the inhabitants to draw the water from the conduit (called a *kanat*) which runs under the street. There are no fountains

with spouts in Teheran; the inhabitants have to rely on these holes for the supply of water, which is nothing but melted snow brought down by underground *kanats* from the mountains. These *kanats* are the property of private individuals, who appoint turncocks to turn the water of the *kanat* into this or the other house or garden, and collect the money, water being very valuable in this dry country. The head of each system of conduits is an important personage, with the grand title of *Amir-ab*, which means Prince of the Waters. He settles the disputes that often arise about the quantity of water which has or has not been supplied to such and such a person, and in summer-time he is the busiest man in town. These disputes become so acrimonious on account of the scarcity and costliness of water, that men are sometimes killed in them.

In some streets the *kanats* do not run under the ground, but it is sure not to be very long before they become subterranean. The holes mentioned above oblige foot-passengers to look on the ground; for if they are inattentive and watching the evolutions of the birds of prey swooping from the sky, or cats running on the terraces, they will suddenly fall in. During the night people have to double their precautions about holes. But then people seldom go out at night in these quarters, except during the month of Ramadan, and never without a *fanous* (lantern).

At the corner of a street, on a little square, in the middle of which an elm of the spreading leafy type

usual in Persia gave some shadow, was a *hammam*, easily recognisable by the lofty arch of its door, over which shone an inlaid tile picture of Rustem, the Persian hero, trampling on the White Div (Devil). Upon the roof, drying upon clothes-lines fastened to movable posts, were the huge yellow and red striped cloths in which the bathers wrap themselves, and blue and white towels, flapping in the wind like the flags of a regatta. Under the arch of the door were seated the barber, and the pipelighter of the *hammam*, and a few shampooers, naked to the loins, except for their bathing wrappers, and bareheaded—all the central part of the head being shaved, leaving only two long locks which fall behind the ears. Under the shade of the elm tree two of the shampooers were killing time by wrestling, which is their favourite pastime while they are waiting for customers.

Only the Mussulmans of the Shiite sect are allowed to enter these baths. For all human beings belonging to other sects, including even the Sunnite Mohammedans, are impure; and since their impurity becomes double when they are wet, the *hammam* is the last place to which they would be admitted.

When Europeans want to try the charms of the vapour baths, they are bound to go to the Armenian *hammams*. There are two or three of them, very clean, in the new quarter.

Continuing our walk we arrived at the bazar, and went to the caravanserai of Hajeb-ed-Dowleh. It is

a huge square courtyard, surrounded by two-storeyed arcaded buildings, with a tank in the middle shaded by numerous trees. In it are stored all the goods that the caravans bring to the wholesale merchants before they are distributed to the retail traders. This one was built by Nasr-ed-din Shah. The chief wares stored here are glass, crockery, lamps, and lustre candlesticks from Russia and from Baccarat in France. Baccarat is as well known in its way as Sèvres, though the fame of the town has been eclipsed by the famous gambling game. Other wares to be found there are cotton goods from Manchester, of which there is an enormous consumption all through Persia. The Persian cotton fabrics are imitated so well in Manchester, that they are sold for Persian in the markets of Persia. There is generally a contract that certain patterns, called *Kalemkar* (printed cottons), should not be sold to anyone but the wholesale houses in Persia who have ordered them. They may occasionally be found in Europe, but they have always made the journey to Persia first. Russia is now exporting cotton goods in considerable quantities to the north of Persia, and Teheran is the borderland where the two empires meet.

The cloths of Europe are also to be found in this caravanserai. They are principally manufactured in Austria. They are not as expensive as the good English cloths, and have colours more to the Persian taste.

Some important merchants have their offices in th



caravanserai of Hajeb-ed-Dowleh. They supervise the unloading of caravans; and the courtyard is then a medley of camels, of piled-up bales of goods, and large transactions. There is a bank in the building. The stables are not there, because if there were animals there would have to be men to look after them, and the bazars are hermetically closed at night. Nobody is allowed to enter them. The animals are kept in caravanserais outside the bazar.

The ground floor of the caravanserai is occupied by warehouses, a few of which have recently been transformed into shops. The offices are on the upper floor.

From this caravanserai we walked to the Post Office, for it was the day of the arrival of the mail, which comes twice a week, once by way of the Caspian, and once by way of Tabriz. These are the only mail routes from Europe. The mails are brought by horsemen in huge black leather sacks, slung behind the saddle, one on each side of the horse. The mail service in my time was pretty secure, and if letters were *not* registered they were sure to reach their destination, in the rare cases in which the mail was robbed; for the robbers kept only the registered letters, and threw all the others on the side of the road, where they could be found by the rescue party. However, the mail is generally attacked once or twice every year. It has been found out that the people who rob it are those who send money by it. They arrange for it to be stolen, and as they have in-

sured it, the Post Office has to pay up the amount. It is as simple as arson, but the results are not always favourable, because now the Government begins by arresting the man who comes to ask for the money. There are no foreign Post Offices in Persia, like those of Turkey, but the Post Office is managed on European lines by a German.

We got there before the arrival of the mail. The office was full of the servants of the Legations, who had come to fetch the mails of their masters.

A letter addressed to a person in Teheran cannot be posted in Teheran. The post is only for the country and abroad ; letters in the city are delivered by servants. When a European wants to send a letter to the Post Office, he always has it registered, because the Persian servants are such thieves that if he gave the money to them they would keep it, and if he put stamps on they would take them off and throw the letter away, while for registered letters they have to bring back a receipt.

When you send a note by a servant, the recipient signs for it on the envelope, which is brought back to you. This is the Persian form of the chit system.

Some form of Post Office has long existed in Persia, and in the old time it was very well organised, under the name of Berid and Oskondar.

The Telegraph service also had an ancient equivalent in the carrier pigeon post.

In winter time the mails are irregular. They then

generally take twenty-five days from London, though in summer they are delivered in fourteen to sixteen days. You receive the London papers in that time.

The most original method of insurance of which I ever heard was brought to my notice one day in the caravanserai Amir. I was talking with a merchant while camels loaded with dates pressed into goat-skins were having their packs taken off. As the merchant was a banker, I looked astonished, and asked, "Why, are you selling dates now?" He laughed, and nodded, and had them taken up to his room. There they were cut open, and the middle of each was found to be filled with silver bars. He added, "This is the way that a client of mine, an old-fashioned merchant of Kurdistan, who does not believe in banks, insists upon insuring the payments which he has to send me."

When we left the Post we went to the Bazar of the Gold Workers and Jewellers. It has an air of solemnity which reminds one of the Bazar of the Booksellers. Its brick vaults are dark, and the glass show-cases standing on the tables or on the ground do not present the glittering spectacle that one would expect in the Land of Jewels. The reason is that in his cleverness the Persian jeweller exhibits to the eye of the passer-by only just enough to make him stop. Then, inviting him in, if he thinks he will be a good client, he shows him his finest pieces.

We examined the cases. Here were some pale turquoises of little value, mounted in silver or tin rings ;

there were the cheap jewels worn by the women of the nomad tribes—*khalkhal* (anklets) of brass, *khalkhal* of silver, and bracelets of little blue stones strung together like beads. I was bargaining for one of those little gold roses of erratic form worn in the left nostril by women of the tribes of Arabistan, when I was jostled by a huge black eunuch, with an emaciated face and a long thin neck, who was clearing the way for a black phantom—his mistress—who glided rapidly into the shop, followed by other phantoms.

That was enough to give me a desire to watch the lady, and contrive to see her making her purchases, in the hope that in her excitement she would uncover her face. Without doubt she was, if not actually a princess, the wife of some grandee, for only the most important people have black eunuchs. Directly she came in, the merchant left me to give her his attention, and his place was taken by one of his assistants. The erratic gold roses had lost all their interest in my eyes. It was the mysterious roses concealed behind the lace of the princess's *rouhband* that chained all my attention. Her passage had left a train of the intoxicating perfume of tuberose. It gave quite an atmosphere of spring, which made me tingle, and this was so apparent that the Mirza became uneasy. The merchant would have liked me to go away, that was evident. But all this only increased my desire to stay, and, putting aside the gold roses, I said I was looking for very beautiful turquoises to send to Europe. This mollified the merchant; he begged me

to wait a little, for he was just going to show his best turquoises to the *Khanoum* (lady).

I assumed an indifferent air, and looked at the passers-by. Then, to escape the inquisitive looks of that terrible eunuch, I shrank behind the Mirza, who, with a prudence natural to a Persian, was turning his back to the phantoms.

I engaged him in a conversation on the poets, his favourite subject, and he began to talk with such an interest and volubility that even the eunuch was reassured. But I did not hear a word he was saying, all my attention was taken up with what was going on in the back of the shop. I examined with a furtive eye, over the Mirza's shoulder, the black phantom, who was just sitting on a carpet specially spread on the ground for her. Her suite of phantoms remained standing round her. But my luck did not desert me, for between two of the dark *chaders* I could watch "my princess" without anybody noticing it.

As soon as she had seated herself, tea was brought to her. She took the cup with a small hand, gloved in green silk, and with the other, to my stupefaction and joy, she lifted a corner of her *rouhband* till I could perceive, in the frame of the dark silk *chader*, the most exquisite face that one could imagine. The pure oval of her face, the fairness of her skin, with the blood in her cheeks accentuated by rouge, made me understand the truth of the Oriental poets' phrase when they compare a beautiful face to a moon, and by chance the Mirza

was reciting at this very moment the verse: "And she discovered her face: it was the moon at the fourteenth night in the envelopment of clouds chased by the wind."

I was startled. It was just the picture that I had before my eyes. I barely had time to see her long, almond-shaped eyes before the *rouhband* fell down again. The merchant began by taking out of little bags a few second-rate stones, to which she did not pay much attention. Then he opened heavy coffers of cedarwood, with stout iron bands and huge, mysterious locks. And, little by little, with a hundred precautions, accompanied by a hundred little discourses, he laid before her coveting eyes a hundred temptations, each greater than the last, in a slow and cunning graduation.

He took great care not to show her at once his turquoises. He began by amethysts of Mekram; then he brought out twisted strings of seed pearls; then a gold bracelet, covered with enamels representing embracing lovers, birds, and flowers. After this came clasps of emeralds to hold the *chargat* under the chin. Then came *jikas*, flashing with diamonds, surmounted by aigrettes, some of feathers, some of gold, thickly set with gems. The interest of "my princess" seemed to advance. She sniffed from time to time a little bouquet of jasmine, but when the merchant presented to her the superb turquoises of Nishapur, of a dark and brilliant azure flashing like blue eyes, she grew excited, and lifted her *rouhband* a little in order to examine them more closely, not at all particular about

showing her face to the old merchant, who to astonish her had just been laying out in front of her, on a piece of black velvet, huge pearls from the Baharein—the islands in the Persian Gulf from which the finest pearls of the Orient come—and huge, uncut rubies and sapphires which he said were from Golconda.

Little by little I had edged the Mirza forward. He was so absorbed in his poetical recitations that he did not notice it, and so I was getting quite close to the *Khanoum*, when the eunuch, whom I had forgotten, began to exhibit signs of nervousness. The Mirza whispered in my ear, "We had better go if we want to avoid trouble, for I see the eunuch looking at us with sinister eyes."

I did remark the heavy eyes with their bloodshot whites of the great negro in the black frock-coat with gathered skirts, and the wrinkles of his face, which paleness under the black made greenish. His hanging under-lip was trembling with rage and uneasiness. He stepped towards the Mirza and whispered a few words in his ear. The Mirza became very agitated, and turned towards me eyes in which I saw such fright and supplication that I understood the gravity of the situation, and followed him out of the shop without a word.

Two dismounted horsemen, armed to the teeth, part of the lady's escort, were waiting at the door—I had not noticed them before.

At the same moment my princess got up. She had

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not made up her mind about her purchases. It is not usual in the East to settle anything all at once. As she passed me her little jasmine bouquet fell at my feet. The phantoms swept on, and when I had picked up the jasmine, unnoticed by the bowing jewellers, I watched these dark clouds, which concealed "a moon at its fourteenth night," slowly melting in the distance.

CHAPTER XXVI

BAZARS—IV

THE CARPET BAZAR

THE bazar into which one goes oftenest in Persia is the Bazar of Carpets. This suggests much to the European mind, which at once thinks of a vast display of rich hangings and gorgeous colours. In Persia one sees nothing of the kind. The carpets are all piled up, one over the other, and when you want to buy a carpet the men of the shop pull them out one after the other in front of you, and build them into fresh piles on the opposite side. It is very difficult to make up your mind, for you never see more than two displayed at the same time. It takes a very long time; for, carrying in your head as well as you can the remembrance of those you like best, you are always having another one pulled out, and before you manage to get the three or four you really like best all shown at the same time, several hours will have gone, and pounds of dust, coming from all parts of Persia, will have been swallowed. However, you need not regret the time expended, so many precious articles

will have been exhibited before you, each more beautiful than the other.

The first carpet that struck me was one from Kerman, woven with extraordinary fineness. Its pattern represented a tree on which parrots in great profusion and every attitude ate extraordinary fruits. Under that tree, which took up nearly all the carpet, were some very small gazelles, a quarter of the size of the parrots, and round it was a very delicately drawn border. The next carpet was from Turkestan. On a background of venetian red, dark blue geometrical drawings were repeated at regular intervals. But this one, which was made of very good material, had a hideous design. It was a bad copy of the Early Victorian carpet, representing a tiger eating an apple under a rosebush. Then the merchant brought out a beautiful dark blue carpet, decorated with narcissi, tulips, and hyacinths, white, red, yellow, and green, of a pre-Raphaelite pattern, which came from Kurdistan. It was an old one, they are not made any more.

Directly after this he showed me a carpet with a regular pattern of henna flowers, which was the modern representative of the same school. The next, of the same pattern, but with very crude colours, showed that in spite of the new laws forbidding aniline colours, these chemical dyes are spoiling the manufacture of modern carpets. Happily this was the exception, and it is to be hoped that the laws by which aniline dyes have recently been prohibited from

entering Persia will be enforced with Draconian severity.

After many notable examples from Feraghan, Khorassan, Turkestan, Khoi, and Daghestan, I was shown one very curious carpet, with a white background, on which was drawn with black lines an Assyrian king with wings, copied from the bas-reliefs of Persepolis. His name, Nebuchadnezzar, was written under it in Roman letters. I regretted to see such good work and such fine materials wasted on such a miracle of bad taste. It was executed in one of the best workshops of Kerman.

Silk carpets are very much appreciated in Persia. They are generally of the type of prayer carpets, representing two columns, a vault, and in the middle a mosque lamp hanging down. Another usual pattern for the silk carpets is a vase of flowers with birds. The Persian weavers receive orders, especially from Cairo, for very large silk carpets.

The wily Persian has discovered the secret of making new carpets look ancient. He smokes them over a fire made with special herbs, and this gives the carpet a used appearance and fades the colours. It is nearly impossible, when this is well done, to distinguish between a genuine antique and a forgery.

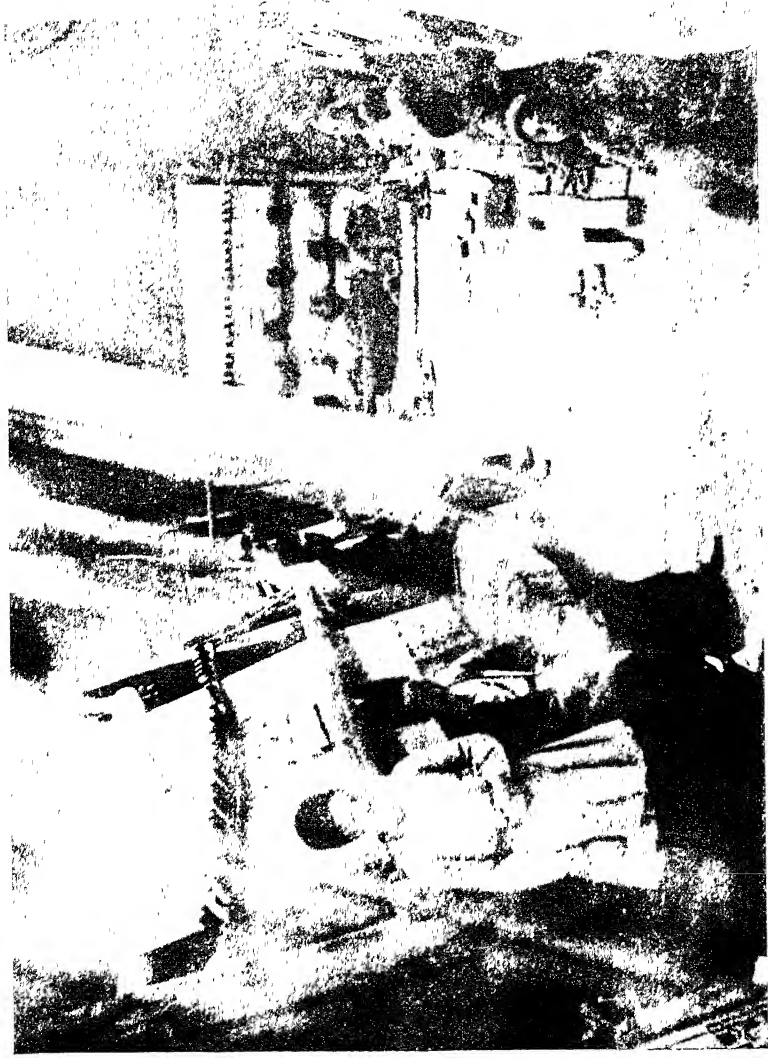
A commoner way of ageing a carpet (very common in the bazars) is to spread it out on the street, in order that every passer-by and animal may trample on it.

In Tabriz, an Englishman, Mr. Stevens, conceived the happy idea of starting a carpet-weaving industry, where only old patterns are made. He tries to revive the old traditions, and has succeeded very well. I went to see his workrooms in the bazars. They were established in a large sort of shed with mud walls and roof, lighted by mere holes of windows and skylights. The weaving was done on old-fashioned hand-loom, some of them eight or ten feet high. Little boys of ten to twelve were perched on planks in front of the looms; a man, holding in his hand the pattern of the carpet with all the colours marked in squares, like our Berlin woolwork patterns, sang to a popular tune the number and the colour of each thread—one blue, two red, one yellow, etc.—which was repeated in chorus by all the little boys, and accompanied by the noise of the bobbins which go through the warp threads, and the rhythmical swish with which the boys cut the thread after making the little knots.

These little apprentices, dressed in a variety of colours, perched on their planks and singing at the tops of their voices, were like love-birds sitting on a branch.

Interesting as it all was, the Mirza and I were tired out before we made our escape, and nearly smothered by the dust we had to swallow. Orientals have no notion of terminating. Besides, I could feel in my pocket that little jasmine bouquet I had picked

STATE



Carpet weaving in the Bazar.

up the day before, and I was burning to get to the Bazar of the Jewellers. But I did not want to tell the Mirza my intention, so I pretended that I wished to go to the Bazar of Arms and Antiquities, which is next to it.

Then, as we passed the Bazar of the Jewellers, I mentioned, in an off-hand way, that the little incident of yesterday had prevented my seeing the turquoises, and suggested that we should go in and look at them now.

On entering the shop, my heart beat a little faster when I noticed, sitting in the very same place, several phantoms. But to-day there was no eunuch, no armed horsemen outside. Surely it could not be "my princess"!

"Show me those turquoises!" I cried to the merchant, in a brusque and offended sort of way, for I felt a little disappointed and nervous. At the noise of my voice the phantoms turned towards me, but the *rouhbands* remained impenetrable. The turquoises were brought by an assistant, and whilst I was examining them I noticed that the seated *Khanoum* turned her head my way very often. I glanced at her inquisitively, and took the jasmine from my pocket. She found that her *rouhband* required arranging, and in the process managed to slip aside just enough to let me recognise "my princess" of yesterday, smiling engagingly. But the *rouhband* fell very quickly, for at that moment the repulsive visage of the eunuch darkened the doorway.

She got up and left the shop before I had time to think of anything. And I forgot all about the turquoises, and went off without saying a word to the astonished jeweller.

It was now sunset—the Muezzin was summoning the faithful to prayer; the bazars emptied rapidly, for it was time for the gates to be locked for the night. The gates are very massive, and have such huge locks that they are quite a strain on the strength of the gatekeeper. There is a *Sar-ghasmeh*, or watchman, at the head of each alley, to look after the security of the goods.

When they catch a thief they take him direct to the Shahshan Bazar, where there is a special prison, in which also any merchant who has been caught cheating is brought before a judge. The cases are tried instantly, and the punishment is carried out on the spot. It may be bastinado on the soles of the feet, or, in the case of a merchant caught cheating with weights or selling adulterated things, he may be nailed by the ear to the doorpost of his shop, so that all his customers may enjoy his shame. Or he may have a ring put through his nose and be led through the bazar by a string. There is also a post like our old-fashioned pillory to which he may be nailed or bound.

The inspectors of weights and measures adopt all sorts of disguises and expedients to carry on their business without being recognised. They even dress



A Persian Tradesman.

up as old women, who are of all human beings the most likely to be cheated. Suddenly from the *rouhband* appears a beard, and the unfortunate transgressor is apprehended by *ferrashes*, running up at the inspector's signal, and taken to the bastinado.

CHAPTER XXVII

BAZARS—V

THE BAZAR OF STUFFS: THE BAZAR OF ARMS AND
ANTIQUES: THE BAZAR OF GRAIN AND FLOUR AND
GROCERIES: THE SHAH IN THE BAZAR

ONE day when we were passing in front of Shems-el-Emaret, one of the palaces of the Shah, we saw the famous Persian wrestlers. This is a much-patronised profession. The wrestlers use dumb-bells shaped like big bottles, and do gymnastics as well as wrestle, naked except for their running drawers. The people make a ring round them, and the women of the Shah's harem watch them from behind green tile *Mousharabiehs* in the towers of the Shems-el-Emaret. After having watched for a moment this wrestling of the *Pahlavans*, we entered the bazar.

On the left are to be found the stalls of the seal-cutters. They are very much frequented, for seals are constantly used in Persia by everybody. The seal takes the place occupied by the signature in Europe, and as there are so many people in Persia who cannot write, it is a great convenience. I entered

a shop, and chose a little round silver seal, a small pyramidal affair, with a turquoise let into the side which is to come uppermost on the letter. This is to avoid a waste of time, as the characters are mixed together in elegant curves, and the empty places between them are filled with little flowers and designs.

From there we walked to the Bazar of Stuffs. On our way we were stopped by a band of *loutis*—the street arabs of Teheran, who asked us to see a performance of monkeys. Like the lazzaroni of Naples, they spend the greatest part of their time in lying about in the sun, and the rest in doing mischief. They gamble, they rob, they kill—sometimes for hire, since for them any way of making money is good, so long as they make enough to buy the forbidden *arrack* and to lose at their gambling. They are also jugglers; they have monkeys and bears, and sometimes panthers and even lions tamed, which they lead about the streets with a string. Their life of adventure and of constant struggle makes them great characters. Some, in order to show their daring, attack and rob passers-by in broad daylight; and some, in certain towns of the north of Persia, have established a reign of terror. The police keep an eye upon them. But sometimes it is a sympathetic eye, if the *louti* share with them their plunder.

We entered the Bazar of Stuffs just at the busiest moment. It was crowded with “phantoms.” We stopped at a shop whose owner looked more than usually prepossessing. With profound salaams he

invited us to enter his shop. Tea was brought, and all sorts of precious stuffs were taken out of cupboards. The merchant first produced *gouldouzis* of Resht: stuffs embroidered with flowers and all manner of designs. Then he brought out velvets of Kachan something like Genoa velvets, embroideries of Ispahan and of Bokhara—which last have generally a pattern of green leaves with round red flowers—tissues of silk embroidered with gold palms, made by the Parsee women, called Gabr (our Gebir) in Persia.

I bargained for a delicate muslin of Kerman, spangled with gold embroideries. But the man asked a ridiculous price, and refused to come down from it. The reason he gave was that it had been worked specially for the wedding of the daughter of Nasr-ed-din Shah and Zehir-ed-Dowleh, upon which I thought it was best to go no further, for some day he would forget what he had told me, and tell me something else, and then I could put “his nose in his dirt,” as they say in Persia.

The Persian excels all other Orientals in the number of times which he multiplies the price that he intends to take. It is a safe rule not to pay more than the quarter of what he asks. In Persia, if, from a misunderstanding of the price named, you offer the merchant more than he has asked, instead of taking you at your word and accepting quickly before you have time to realise your mistake, he will double or treble what he asked first, and will rather risk not selling the article than lose the

chance that you have given him of making a rare bargain.

Then I looked at a very remarkable old embroidery of blue silk on a background of cream satin, which was a good deal worn. I looked at it only with a corner of my eye, in order not to show the merchant that I was interested in it, and, taking hold of a rather cheap new embroidery, I asked the price, which of course he instantly quadrupled. I offered half of it, if he would throw something else in—for example, that old thing which is not worth three shahis (three farthings). He smiled at my simplicity, and pushed them both towards me. He had done me on the one thing which had no value, and I had done him right in the eye on the other, which I discovered afterwards to be a very valuable fourteenth-century embroidery. Whilst I was leaving his shop, I heard him mumbling the Persian proverb: "Hast thou a jewel—take it to the jeweller: take care not to offer a jewel to the first donkey which passes—the donkey only wants thistles, and thou offerest him a jewel. To the donkey one thistle is better than two hundred ass-loads of jewels."

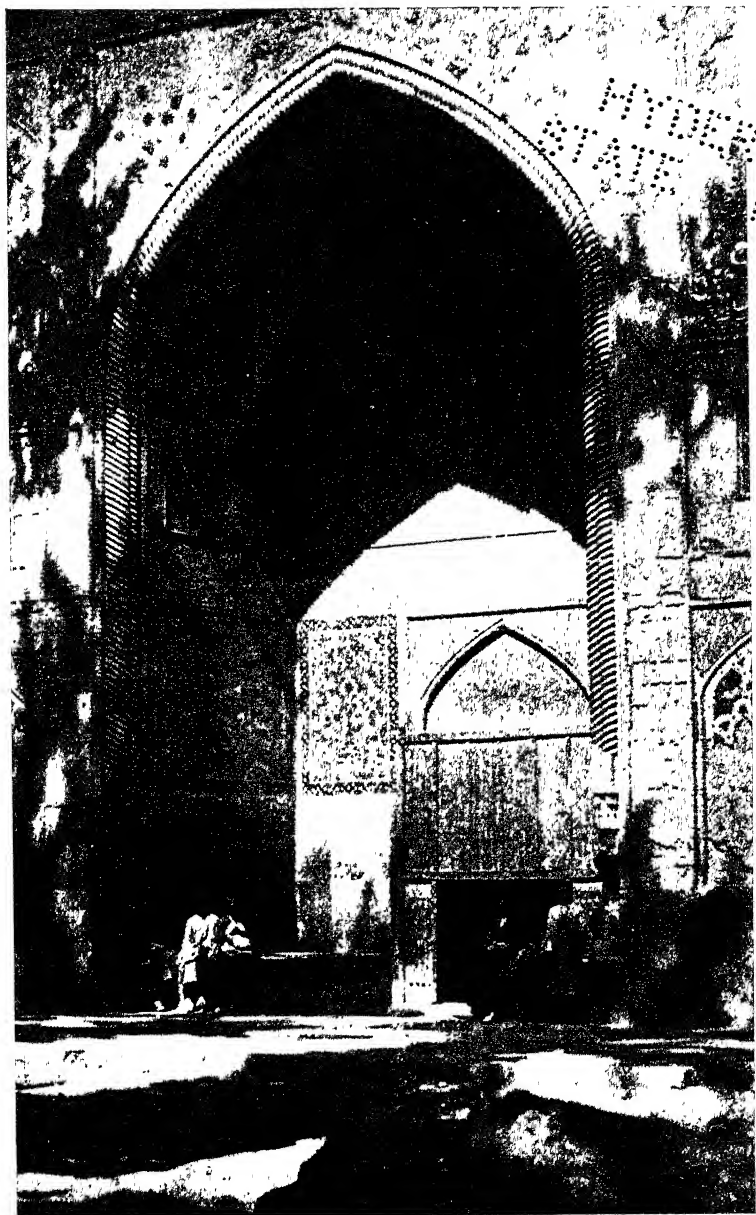
With my bargain under my arm, I walked away, followed by the Mirza, who had kept discreetly silent. He could not understand my elation, because, like most Persians, he did not know the difference between valuable old things and old rubbish. In Persia old things (*Kadim*) have no value except for selling to Europeans. The Persian knows that Europeans are fond of old things,

and one day will bring him mere rags, and another day a rare mediæval curio. Still he was quite sharp enough to see that I had a bargain, and said, "You are lucky ; every time you pick up a stone it becomes gold."

Then we suddenly came upon a most beautiful archway with a sort of apse in it, filled with rich pendentives of marvellously durable white stucco : the walls below the vault had glorious old turquoise-coloured tiles—the upper part of which had an inscription from the Koran in white characters running all round it in a broad belt ; and the under part, by the low, arched doorway, was decorated with a wonderful design of a pot of branching flowers. Across the door was a wooden screen, carried down to the height of a man, like the door of a loose box, with the upper part closed. Below these tiles was a stone bench, on which pious people were seated, waiting for the hour of prayer. It was the entrance to the Meder-i-Shah Mosque.

This led the Mirza to look at his watch. The dial was, of course, marked in the Oriental way. He told me that he used to wind it at sunset, and that as the days grew longer or shorter he had to move the hands every day. This is to indicate the times of prayer, in order that on the days without sun the Persians may be able to know the time of *Talou-afab* (sunrise), *Zohr* (noon), *Assr* (the afternoon hour), and *Moghreb* (sunset), which are the times of prayer. The fifth prayer-time is in the night, the *A'cha*.

We were soon at the Tea and Groceries Bazar—tea



Portal of the Meder-i-Shah Mosque.

being the favourite drink of Persians, is sold in large quantities. A great deal of it comes from India and China, and some is grown in the Caucasus. China tea comes through Russia by caravans along the great Russo-Mongolian trade route.

It was to buy henna that I visited this bazar : a lady friend of mine in Europe had asked me to send her some genuine Persian henna. The best is grown near Kerman. The dried leaves of this plant are pounded in a mortar till they are reduced to a powder. This powder is steeped in hot water and stirred with the hand till it becomes as thick as soup, and is then applied to the roots of the hair. A piece of paper is then laid on the head, over which a cloth is tightly bound. The Persians keep this on all the night long, though two or three hours would have been sufficient. The Persian women stain the whole of their hands and their feet, because it is so good for the skin. The men only dye their nails, as an ornament. The colour that the henna gives to the skin or the hair is a ruddy brown, and to dye the hair or beard black they use after the henna *vesmeh* (indigo) prepared in the same way as the henna. Half an hour after the application of the *vesmeh* they wash the hair with pure water, which leaves it a fine blue-black.

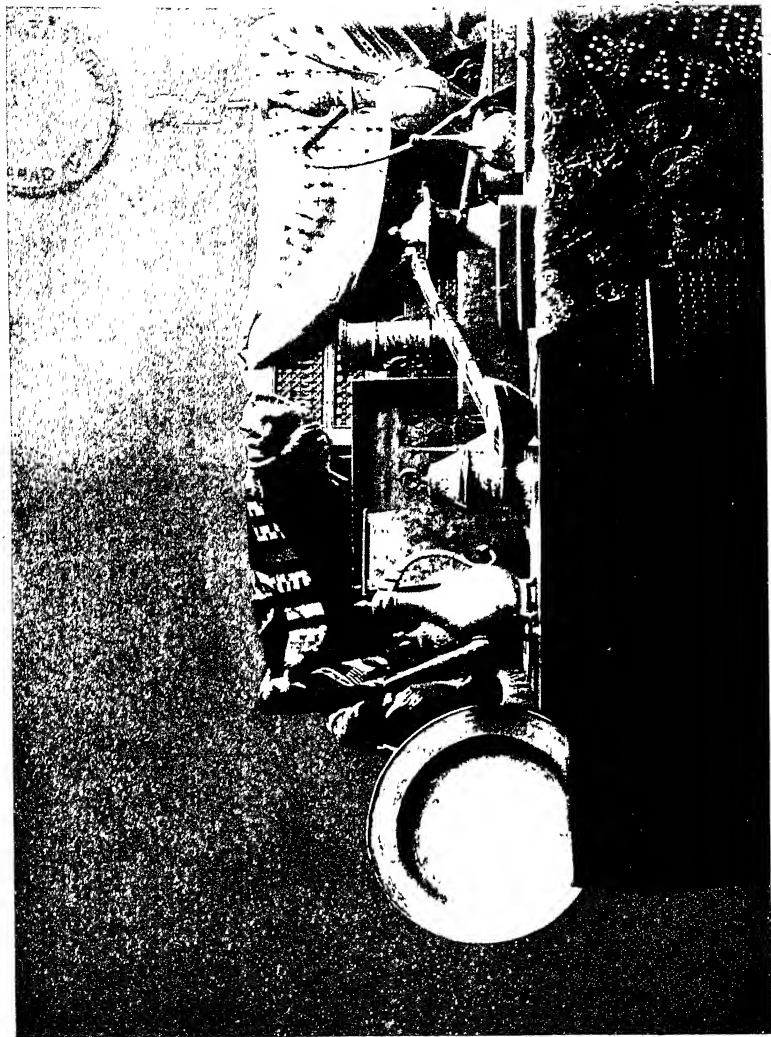
These dyes are not at all injurious, but, on the contrary, preserve the hair and stimulate its growth, and they are not expensive, because each dyeing may last six weeks or two months; and for a woman who has luxuriant hair, forty miskals of henna—under half a

pound, which costs about threepence—is sufficient. Add a penny for the *vesmeh*, and you have the total cost.

In that bazar also are sold cosmetics and the kohl for the eyes, and drugs and medicinal herbs.

There we found also the *kat*, which is a low shrub growing in Yemen and in Abyssinia; the green leaves when fresh have the property of giving insomnia without causing any fatigue, and the inhabitants of these countries who make use of it, instead of suffering by it live to a great age. It does not produce much effect in Persia, because it never gets there till all the leaves are dry. However, it is used during the Ramadan to enable the partaker to keep awake during the night, when he may eat and drink and smoke, and go to sleep during the day while he has to fast.

On our way home we passed through the Bazar of Arms and Antiques, which is one of the most fascinating to the European. Although it has been said that all the interesting things in Persia have been bought up and exported, it is possible still to find good pieces here. There are, for instance, old scimitars, with their hilts encrusted with turquoises and garnets, whose ivory scabbards are magnificently carved, battle-axes, maces, shields, body armour, and helmets of steel, damascened with gold. One has, however, to be very careful about the last, because there is a brisk manufacture of imitations in Ispahan, and one must not forget the Persian saying, "Everything that is round is not a nut," *i.e.* "All that glitters is not gold."



M.E.C. Collection. From the Bazar of Antiquities at Teheran.

In this bazar I bought a very fine inlaid saddle, with the pommel in front of carved ivory, decorated with little stars of the Persian inlaying called *Khatem*.

There is a lot of fine brassware, such as ewers, mosque lamps, and trays, besides the little things which are made on purpose for the European market, like match-boxes and the small open-work plates, whose use I was never able to discover.

A little farther on was a shop where they sold porcelain; where amongst horrible modern Russian things, which had no other title to be *Kadim* except their battered condition, could be found some beautiful china and the unique tiles of rich metallic lustre whose manufacture is a lost art. These fetch a very high price in the market of Teheran; a piece no bigger than a prayer-book may be worth twenty pounds. Especially charming were the tall porcelain flasks, almost the shape of an Italian wine-flask, used for scent, holding a pint or less, some of course quite tiny. The old porcelain tea-caddies which you may find in this bazar are almost unique. They are shaped like our old-fashioned silver tea-caddies.

But the strangest discovery that I made was a very fine eighteenth-century Sèvres cup, lost among very ordinary tea-things, which I bought for sixpence. It was certainly the survival of a present sent by some King of France to the sovereign of Persia in his day.

All sorts of things can be found in that bazar.

Coins are always attractive to Europeans—for one

thing, it is difficult to have too many to put into your portmanteau. Here also you have to be especially careful, for from one genuine coin you may manufacture thousands by moulding. This is why you are always sure to find the huge silver coin, like a five-shilling piece, of Alexander the Great, which has a head with a casque and a strikingly handsome profile.

There are many imitations of Greek and Roman coins, because so many genuine ones are found in Persia—sometimes you hit upon a genuine one by mistake.

The old Sassanian coinage and more recent Persian issues are to be found in quantities.

Bled as you may be by the merchants, you are never likely to suffer as his faithful lieges suffer at the hands of the Shah, when, walking into the bazar with a numerous suite, he selects a shop which has the appearance of being well filled with the most valuable kinds of merchandise.

He enters it, and offers the merchant to go into partnership with him—an offer which is always accepted with enthusiasm, for the Shahin-Shah sets up an auction, and the courtiers run the price up and struggle to curry favour with him, so that a thing which is worth one shilling may be sold for twenty pounds, and it has to be paid cash down, for, as the Persian proverb says, "A box on the ear in cash is better than the promise of sweatmeats," which is much stronger than our "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

When everything is sold, the Shah makes up the

accounts with his temporary partner, who is delighted at such a windfall; and the Shah, equally delighted to have made a little ready money, goes back to his palace cheered by the populace, and conscious of well-doing.

The Shah's success as a merchant shows that the proverb which says that "One cannot hold two water-melons in one hand" does not always hold good.

CHAPTER XXVIII

RELIGIONS

PERSIA is prolific in religions. To name only the most important, we have to begin with the oldest, the Zoroastrian, which is now represented by the Gabr, or Parsees. Small communities of them are scattered in certain provinces. They are persecuted, and have none of the wealth and influence enjoyed by the Parsees of Bombay. In Teheran they are all gardeners. There are a fair number of Jews, all engaged in trade.

Next to them in the matter of their antiquity are certain Christian sects—the Nestorians, Armenians, and Chaldeans, who were in Persia before the Mahometan conquest. They are not very numerous or very important except from the antiquarian point of view. It may be mentioned that they furnish the converts of the various Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox missions.

Third in point of antiquity, but far the most important, are the Mohammedans, who are in Persia mostly Shiites, though there are also many Sunnites, especially in the western and northern provinces. Many schisms have divided the Mohammedans—for instance, Sufism, Ali-Oullism, Ismailism, and lately Babism.

The State religion is Shiite Mahometanism.

Religion is too solemn a subject to be introduced much into "Queer Things about Persia," though it is queer enough, in all conscience, in the land of the Shah ; but there are certain peculiarities in connection with the Shiite Mahometanism which have a spectacular interest that brings them within the scope of this book : for example, the religious theatres and processions.

The Shiites assumed at first the name of "Friends of the people of the Prophet's House." One of the features of their religion is the quasi-adoration which is accorded to Ali.

Ali is the heir of the temporal goods of the Prophet, the legitimate successor to the throne, and above all he is associated in the revelation. He is, in the eyes of the Persians, the depositary of the secrets of God.

Ali, nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, had nine wives, fifteen sons, and nineteen daughters.

Abou-Bekr, Omar, Osman, who were Caliphs after the death of Mahomet, are considered as usurpers, blasphemers, and sacrilegious persons, and they are hated.

The Shiites have not even hesitated to add to the profession of faith given by the Prophet, "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his prophet," the words, "and Ali is his Vali (lieutenant)." The Prophet himself takes the second place in their creed, and the most childish tales are reported quite seriously by good

historians about the beloved Ali. For example, the following story told by Ammar Yacer:¹—

“Ali departed from Kufa one day to go to Babel upon very important business. He was so busy there that he had no time to say his prayers. The sun was setting when a young man cried to him, “O Ali, hear my prayer and pity me! Alas, my wife and my children are dying with hunger. I had a field whose products gave us our subsistence, but for three years past a monstrous lion has settled on my property, and nobody dares enter to cultivate it.”

Then Ali turned towards me, and said, “O Ammar, go thou with that young man, and when he has shown thee the lion, present to it this ring, and say, ‘O Lion, Ali orders thee to leave this spot!’” I remained much perplexed, for though I was frightened of the lion, I was still more frightened of the Prince of the Believers. But at last, feeling bound to obey, I committed myself to the mercy of God, and went. When we got to his estate, the young man climbed upon a tree, and, trembling, pointed out to me a little knoll, and told me that the lion was behind it. I advanced, and saw a lion as big as a buffalo. I felt fear seizing me, especially when the lion, after having looked at me, sprang towards me, roaring terribly. I held out the ring to him, and recited the orders of Ali. I had hardly finished when the lion bowed down in the dust, and then, getting up, went away. I was much

¹ Translated from the *Zinnet-el-Medjalis* by A. L. M. Nicolas.

astonished at it all, and thought that some magic had been performed, but I quickly repented of such an unworthy thought.

When I returned to Ali the sun was just disappearing behind the horizon. Ali, raising his hands towards the sky, made a sign, and the orb of day retraced his steps obediently, and put himself at the spot he should occupy at the moment of the prayer.

Ali then made that prayer which he had no time to do till then, and when it was finished, he turned towards me and said, "O Ammar, if what thou hast seen about the lion was an illusion of magic, what wilt thou say of the obedience of the sun to my orders?"

There are a quantity of stories of this order told and believed by the majority of Shiites.

Their love for Ali is balanced by their hatred for Omar, the second Caliph, whom they abhor more than Christians hate Judas Iscariot. Curses for Omar are constantly on the lips of the Persians. One wonders why; is it because he conquered Persia? Very few Persians remember that. And at the same time it may be said that it is thanks to Omar that they were led to the true faith.

But logic has nothing to do with these matters.

This hatred of Omar has given rise to as many legends as the love of Ali. Here is one of the most extraordinary :—

One day Omar's wife was washing the linen of the

house. She prayed her husband to fetch some water at the spring not far from there. He took a pitcher, and went to the spring. At that moment he was transformed into a female dog. The street boys who saw him in this new shape threw stones at him, and he fled barking. He lived in this condition for seven years in the midst of his brother dogs, and fulfilled all the natural functions of his new state. One day he came across the spot where he had been drawing the water; he was followed by six little puppies that were his offspring, when suddenly he recovered his natural form. He took the pitcher that he found at the spot where he had left it, and, being uncertain as to the reception which awaited him, proceeded very slowly to his house.

He found his wife still washing, and as he made his excuses for having been so long, she said, "But you have not taken more time than was necessary to go from the house to the spring and back."

Stupefied, and not knowing what to think, Omar reflected for a long time, and ended by convincing himself that he had been the victim of a hallucination.

When he got rid of his disquietude, he went to the mosque, where, as was the custom, he found the Prophet seated in the midst of his companions. He saluted them, and took his place in the circle. They were talking, when suddenly six little puppies, walking with difficulty, entered the gate of the mosque. Omar grew pale. The companions of the Prophet, indignant

at the intrusion, sprang up to chase these unclean little animals out of the mosque.

“Let them be,” said the Prophet, “and we shall see what they will do.”

Slowly, and with uncertain paces, the little animals made their way to Omar, shamed out of countenance. When they came near him, they uttered squeals of joy, and crawled over his chest to look for the milk which they were accustomed to find there. The wretched man threw himself at the feet of the Prophet, who, thinking the punishment was sufficient, made a sign, and the puppies disappeared.

All possible means of dishonouring the memory of Omar are employed. Some carpet-makers have woven the name of Omar in their carpets unnoticed, in order that it may be trampled on by the True Believers. Other people have it tattooed upon the soles of their feet.

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The following are the events which led up to the schism of Persia and the foundation of the Shiite sect.

Ali, nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, was a man of the most chivalrous and devoted nature, but he managed to have some powerful enemies, amongst whom was the all-powerful daughter of Abou-bekr, Ayesha, the only wife of Mahomet that had not been married before. He made an enemy of her in this way.

She was the youngest and most beautiful of the

wives of the Prophet. She was accused on one occasion of having committed adultery with Sawan, who commanded the rear-guard of the army of Mahomet.

In the Sonna or Book of the Traditions she herself tells the following story in the following manner :—

Every time that the Prophet went away on an expedition, he cast lots to see which of his wives he should take with him. When a new war was announced to us, our hearts were beating with hope or fear. The decision of the lots had been that time in my favour. The Apostle of God covered me with a veil, and I went in his train on a camel, according to the custom of women, concealed from sight by the hangings of my litter as if I had been under a tent.

When the expedition was finished, the signal of departure was given, and the army marched back towards Mecca.

I was obliged to dismount from my camel. My litter was taken off its back for the purpose. I waited until the troops had departed before I thought of mounting again. I discovered then that I had lost my necklace, and retraced my steps to the spot where I had been resting. I was a long time looking about for it, and meanwhile some soldiers passing near my litter lifted it up and put it on the camel again, believing that I was in it. They were not surprised at its lightness, attributing it to the care women take not to burden themselves with much baggage in such travels, and to my great youth—for I was then only fifteen. My

attendants could not guess my absence, and drove my camel off without me.

When I had found my necklace, I returned in glee to the spot where I had left my litter. There was not a soul there. I called out, but there was no answer. I filled the air with my shrieks: they were not heard. I hoped that my absence would be noticed and someone would return to fetch me, but my hopes were dashed. Weary with calling out and waiting, I sat down, and slumber overtook me. Sawam, who shared my unhappiness, had remained with the rear-guard: he passed in the early morning the place where I was reposing.

Seeing me without a veil, he recognised me. I woke at hearing his voice. "We are the Sons of God," he said, "and we return to him."

I call Heaven to witness that he did not say anything else. I covered myself with my veil. He had his camel brought up and helped me to mount, and led it by the bridle till we rejoined the main body.

Ayesha pleaded her cause before her husband, her father, and her mother. She was young, beautiful, and eloquent, and succeeded. Mahomet, who loved her tenderly, was delighted to find her innocent, and in order not to let any doubt rest on her conduct, no cloud darken her reputation, he called down from heaven the twenty-fourth chapter of the Koran, which justifies her completely.

"When you heard the accusations, the faithful of the two sexes have not they thought privately what was right

to believe? Have they not said that it was an impudent lie? If divine mercy and goodness had not kept an eye on you, this lie would have brought upon your heads a terrible chastisement. It has run from mouth to mouth. You have repeated that of which you were ignorant, and you have regarded a calumny as a venial fault, while it is a crime in the eyes of the eternal."

All the accusers of Ayesha were punished—with eighty strokes of a whip. Ali, consulted by Mahomet in that delicate affair, had counselled him to interrogate the maid of Ayesha. The young wife did not forget this counsel, and owing to that she intrigued against his succession to the Caliphate.

In spite of the chances he had of getting the Caliphate, his enemies succeeded in putting him aside, and Abou-bekr, Omar, and Osman were Caliphs before him. He then became Caliph for four years, and was murdered in the mosque of Kufa.

Yezid seized the Caliphate. But one of the sons of Ali, Houssein, had married the daughter of the last king of the Sassanian dynasty of Persia, Yezdejerd. He lived in Medina with his brother Hassan, his sister Zeyneb, and the children of these two, all that remained of the blood of the Prophet.

When Ali was dead, his partisans persuaded Houssein that his duty was to take the Caliphate, and little by little he was driven into a sort of conspiracy. The inhabitants of Kufa, penitent for the crime that had been committed in their mosque against Ali, made

him promises of help, undertaking to proclaim him Caliph.

Houssein, believing in these promises, left Medina and his brother Hassan, and went with all his family to Kufa. This caravan formed what the Persians call the People of the Tent. But Yezid sent some cavalry in pursuit of him, who surrounded the camp of Houssein in the desert, a short distance from the Tigris, in the plain of Kerbela.

At first the soldiers feared to commit sacrilege by killing more people of the blood of the Prophet. But the orders of the Caliph were decisive. They then tried to make them die of thirst. No one was allowed to come out of their tents, which were filled with children and women in far greater proportion than men. They were altogether about eighty. The heat was insupportable, and the water soon gave out. Imam Abbas was the first to sally out towards the river to get some water.

He took a water-skin, mounted his horse, but was stopped by the blockaders. An Arab soldier cut off his right hand : he took the skin in his mouth to leave his left hand free for the scimitar, and again made for the enemy. His other hand was hewn off, and at the same moment several weapons pierced him, and he fell dead.

The second martyr was Ali Akbar, little more than a child, who tried to get to the river, but met with the same fate. All the *People of the Tent* died in this way, one after the other, by most tragic and horrible deaths.

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To their adoration for Ali the Shiites add the cult of the Imams, who are twelve in number—except among one sect, which recognises only seven.

The twelfth Imam, the Imam Mehdi, or Mahdi, is supposed to be still living, but concealed. He travels through the world, and it is supposed to be known exactly and every day in what direction his envoys are to be found.

In the Persian calendar can be read the following :—

“Those among the chosen slaves elected that are called Abdal or Rijal-oul-Keib, or else the Companions of His Highness the *Master of the Order*, Imam Mehdi, are to be found on four days every month, on one of the spots of the world, and spread their blessings upon the creatures.

“The morning when one leaves the house, or begins to work, he must pay attention to which side they are. Then he must make the appointed prayer.”

Then comes the following notice, indicating on what days they will be in each quarter : “The first, the ninth, and the seventeenth of each month, these blessed beings are in the east. On the second, tenth, eighteenth, twenty-sixth, they are between the east and the north. On the third, eleventh, nineteenth, twenty-seventh, they are in the north.” And so on.

These personages are constantly moving with a stupefying rapidity. They travel on horseback, sometimes with their master, the Imam Mehdi ; and sometimes

when they meet men they allow themselves to be seen, converse, and work miracles.

These apparitions take the place in Persia which the apparitions of Our Lady and the Saints hold in Roman Catholic countries. There used to be a miracle also corresponding to the Liquefaction of the Blood of St. Januarius at Naples. It was a tree bleeding during the first days of Moharrem every year, and a quantity of pilgrims used to go there.

It is the Imam Mehdi who will reappear one day and wipe from the surface of the earth all the unbelievers. He is the "man" of the Last Judgment.

In fact the Shiites believe that there will be two last judgments, because Islam being the religion of God, it is not admissible that it should not reign all over the world. It is, from the Mussulman point of view, very simple: Mahomet has placed his own family on the same rank as the Koran. This family alone, therefore, possesses the complete and absolute knowledge. And this is exactly what happens with Ali and the twelve Imams. The last of these twelve has disappeared, and hence the gate of knowledge has been shut, and the Shiite religion has ceased to be spread through humanity. As divine knowledge has not been completely unveiled to the eyes of the world, there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that a part of the world remains "unfaithful." Only the elect of God, His beloved people, those upon whom He has poured His blessing, become Mussulmans.

The missing Imam will reappear: it is he who will

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unveil the last mysteries. He is in that sense the proof of God ; the light that he will spread will be so blinding that only those whose heart is made hard by the devil will not see it.

The surface of the world will then be inhabited by Mussulmans only. It is for them that will shine the second day of the Last Judgment, when everybody will receive the recompense and the chastisement that is due to them. The unfaithful will have nothing to see in it, for from the apparition of the Imam they will have been definitely condemned, and none will remain on the face of the earth.

CHAPTER XXIX

RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS AND THEATRES—THE PERSIAN OBERAMMERGAU

RELIGIOUS processions are striking in all countries, but especially in Persia, for, in remembrance of the sufferings of their saints, the Persians love to lacerate their bodies.

The month of Moharrem is their Month of Mourning. It is during that month that Imam Houssein, the son of Ali, was assassinated in the desert near Kerbela by the men of the Caliph Yérid.

At the first moon of that month all the Mussulmans put on mourning—they dress in black, leave their shirts open on their chests (regardless of the season; and as the Persians use lunar months, it may be hot or cold), and strike professionally mournful attitudes. Some of the men of the people meet in congregations, go to the mosques, and walk in the streets preceded by a *Mollah*, singing in a monotonous tone sentences like this: *Houssein Kafan-na-dared—i.e.* Houssein has no winding-sheet—whilst they beat their bare chests, rhythmically flinging out their arms to their full length. They beat themselves so fiercely and at the same time that it makes

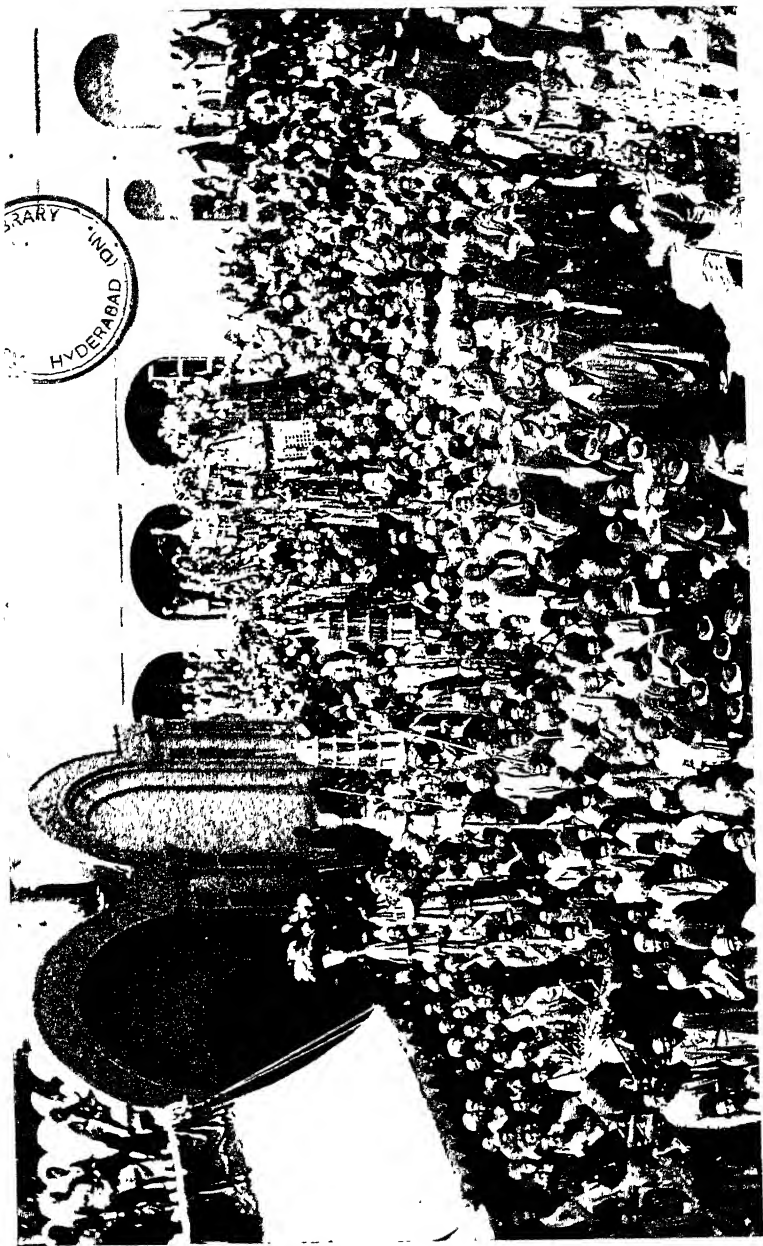
a rolling like a band of drums. Fanaticism is at its zenith, and it is advisable for a European, if he sees such a procession approaching, to make himself scarce.

It is during this month that the only theatrical performances of Persia take place. They are called *Tazieh*, and the place where they are performed is called *Tekieh*. There are two or three special theatres for this in Teheran, the largest is the *Tekieh* in the palace, which was built by Nasr-ed-din, but can no longer be used because people are afraid of its coming down (it is cracked). I have been to several of these sacred dramas with the Mirza.

They are performed in the courtyards of the houses of the rich, who consider it a meritorious act to lend them for the purpose without charge.

One of the best I went to was at the house of one of the Ministers. The courtyard was covered over with an awning, and the tank, which is in the middle of every Persian courtyard, was planked over to make the *sakou* or stage. The neighbours as a meritorious act had lent all their pictures, carpets, curtains, mirrors, lustres, and lamps to ornament the *Tekieh*. Even the poor had participated in these offerings, by lending small things without value.

The lamps and lustres were the feature of the performance. The whole of one side of the courtyard was filled up with wooden shelves for the accommodation of these and glass vases filled with flowers, behind which the pictures and the mirrors had been placed.



Religious Procession in the Bazar.

The effect might have been very beautiful if all these crystal ornaments were not in such shocking taste. It was, anyhow, very curious.

There was a sort of tribune covered with cashmere shawls erected on one side, on which the chief reciting *Mollah* stood.

Everybody, from the prince to the beggar, is admitted free of cost. Carpets were spread all over the courtyard. The women sat on one side carefully covered with their *chader* and *rouhband*. With them might be seen very small girls with uncovered faces.

The other side was occupied by the men, and round the stage a space was left clear.

The master of the house and his guests, amongst whom we were accommodated, were seated at the windows all round—for all the windows in a Persian house look out on the courtyard. They are wide open. Their sashes push up like those of English windows.

Curiously enough, in spite of the fanaticism of the Mahometan Persians, Europeans are invited to be present at these religious dramas. It might not be advisable for them to be in the crowd, but they may be standing at a window; and for some reason—probably the sacredness of hospitality—their presence does not provoke overt fanaticism, though the lower classes look at them with anything but friendly eyes.

Over the sill of the windows rich carpets were spread and vases of flowers were to be seen everywhere.

These representations take place in the afternoon every day, and sometimes at night also.

They are a sort of manifestation of the Persian patriotism in which the *Shiites* show their hatred against the *Sunnite* Arabians and Turks, a hatred that the Shahs and the clergy have encouraged in order to cut off Persia completely from the influence of the Commander of the Faithful at Constantinople.

It is with this same idea, and to form a check to the pilgrimage to Mecca, where lies the tomb of the Prophet, that the sovereigns of Persia have created Meshed, in collusion with the Persian priesthood, who saw a great advantage in it, and go there in great pomp.

The plays performed do not bear the name of any author, and generally they have several authors, for the passages which are unsuccessful are cut out and replaced by fresh passages from other pieces which have made a great impression. It would therefore be nearly impossible to identify the authorship of these hybrid works.

The actors who take part in them, though these representations are regarded with disapproval by the high clergy, enjoy, nevertheless, a good deal of consideration. It is not for nothing that they personify the sacred personages who are dearest to the Persian heart.

They associate themselves in companies of men and boys, under the direction of a chief called *Oustad* or master, a sort of stage manager, who presides over the performance, gives orders to the actors, hands to them

the stage properties, and stirs them up when they lack fire. He also tells the audience where the scene is laid—because, of course, scenery would be impossible on a stage surrounded by the audience. In brief, he is the *deus ex machina* of the *Tazieh*.

Like his colleagues of Europe, he does all he can to get a star for his company, and Mirza Ali Akbar assured me that this one had a star of the first order.

The afternoon representation was about to begin, the programme being "Kassem's Marriage," one of the most popular subjects. The *Tekieh* was filled with a motley crowd, the rich next to the poor, the thief next to the policeman; and all one side of the court presented the aspect of a field of black gourds leaning one against the other—it was the side of the fair sex.

The trumpets, the drums, and the *Kernas*, the long horns used from time immemorial to salute the sun, brayed out their noisy introduction, and a band—*dasteh*—of devotees, beating their breasts, entered, and walked round the *sakou*, invoking the names of Hassan and Houssein. When sherbet and drinks had been served to them, they went out again.

The audience did not show any mark of impatience. A few preparations had been neglected: the *Oustad* came to do them himself, with his assistants. From the masts holding up the awning, he suspended lion skins to recall the desert; scimitars, helmets, and shields as emblems of battles, and some banners. ~~some~~

On one side of the *sakou* he placed a heap of chaff

to represent the sands of the desert, in order that the actors in moments of lamentation might throw handfuls on their heads in sign of mourning in the biblical fashion.

On the other side he placed the basin of a silver ewer, beautifully chased, full of water, to typify the river Tigris. During these preparations, which the spectators followed with interest, some elegant young men served drinks and sherbets and ices to the public. One of them had on his back a goat-skin full of water like a *sakka*—street water-seller—in commemoration of the sufferings by thirst of the martyrs.

Amid the deafening sound of barbarian music the troupe of actors made their entry. It was a long and solemn cortège, at the head of which marched the star, a boy of fifteen, dressed in a cashmere shawl surcoat, with a golden helmet, a coat of mail, and a scimitar. He was very handsome in the Persian style, with eyes a little too large for our taste, and very well defined eyebrows, which almost joined, a mouth with full red lips, and an olive complexion. He had long waving curls falling over his shoulders, and walked slowly, with the dignity, the majesty, and the importance of a peacock spreading his tail. Stars, whether they are in Teheran or in London, are always stars, and constellate.

The Mirza told me that he came from Ispahan, where the people are most graceful and animated. He had begun by being trained when quite small by his father, the chief of a company of dancers, who wished to make of him a singing dancer. His voice was so melodious,

and his elocution so perfect, that he abandoned that profane profession for the sacred art, and came to Teheran, where he obtained large salaries—he was supposed to be paid four hundred *tomans* for the representations of the first ten days of Moharrem. This constitutes affluence for a Persian of the lower class, who can live on a pound a month handsomely.

During the remainder of the year he led the life of a man of means, singing only from time to time at the houses of grandees.

The ill-natured added that he drank, and was ready to lay aside his sacred profession to become once more a singing dancer if he received good offers, and that his morals were not irreproachable.

Like every self-respecting star, he was capricious, exigent, and disagreeable, and was a thorn in the side of his director and his colleagues, who waited with impatience till he should lose his voice and his success to make him rue it.

He took the part of Kassem, the hero of the drama, son of Imam Hassan and nephew of Imam Houssein.

Houssein himself walked beside him a little in the rear. He was a full-grown man, whose tall figure towered over Kassem. Dressed in green, with an immense turban of the same colour, his face was covered with a square veil. Houssein, son of Ali and Fatimeh, the daughter of the Prophet, is supposed by the Persians to be the legitimate Caliph, whose death was decreed by the usurper Yezid.

Other boys and other men followed, the latter taking the parts of aged women or angels. When veiled they could present themselves, and even retain their beards without spoiling the effect. The former furnished young heroes, with bare faces, and young women.

This first group were supposed to be the *People of the Tent*, i.e. the family of the Imams. They went up to take their seats upon the *sakou*, which they never left once during the whole performance. When they were supposed to be on the stage, they stood up; when they were supposed to be off it, they merely sat down.

Houssein sat upon a chair in the middle of the stage. It was a folding deck-chair of gilt bamboo and pink plush, embroidered with outrageous scarlet flowers, bright green leaves, and purple scrolls in the most deplorable taste that Europe can furnish.

Behind him, on a table, was a halo of lamps and lustre candlesticks crowded together like empty bottles.

Kassem sat in front of him in the Persian fashion, upon a beautiful silk carpet. The others seated themselves on different parts of the *sakou*: the bride, Zobeida, daughter of Houssein, on the right, next to Zeyneb, her aunt, Houssein's sister; and the mother of Kassem, the widow of Hassan, who had been poisoned at Medina. Close by was Omm-Leyla, Houssein's wife, daughter of the last Persian king of the Sassanian dynasty, more popularly known under the name of Bibi-shahr-Banou, the lady patron-saint of the town, whose tomb is at

Rey, the ancient Persian capital now in ruins, close to Teheran.

Next to her was the boy who was soon to be the corpse of little Ali Akbar, the youngest among the *People of the Tent*, the one over whose fate the Persians are most miserable. Death overtook him when he had escaped from the tent and was flying to the Tigris to quench his thirst. He was shot down with arrows, and then hacked to pieces.

Beside the Tigris, whose waters glittered in the silver basin, came to sit the "corpse" of Abbas, dressed in a sort of shirt, stuck with arrows and smeared with gore, to show the manner of his death.

On the *sakou* were also several little children not more than four years old, with round caps embroidered with pearls, and all sorts of amulets hanging round their heads and necks, who remained very solemn and sad all through the performance.

The second part of the cortège was the most sumptuous. It was composed of the Caliph Yezid, surrounded by his court and wives and the hated general, Ibn-Saïd, and his lieutenant, Shamr, both murderers. All the richest stuffs, the most beautiful jewels, the most flashing armour were reserved for them, and made a strong contrast to the simplicity of the *People of the Tent*. The Caliph Yezid was personified by a man with a square beard; he wore a robe of silver cloth embroidered with gold palms. All the jewels of the harem of our host—the owner of the *Tekieh*—were sewn upon it. His

horse, led by two pages, was sumptuously harnessed. The other pages behind bore his scimitar and his shield.

Then came his wives, *with their faces uncovered*, represented by boys who had been dressed in costumes lent by European women, a device which without doubt was intended to make them more odious to the public.

Then came the Court and Ibn-Saïd and Shamr at the head of the army. When they had made the circuit of the *sakou*, Yezid, his wives and his Court, went to post themselves upon a tribune near a door under which the army and the horses stationed themselves.

Then the play began.¹

First came a sort of invocation recited by the *Mollah* on the tribune. He took a huge roll of paper and read in a very loud, emphatic, sing-song fashion. It was a sort of prologue, explaining the subject of the present performance.

The "corpses" who were sitting about now took up their positions as corpses. Imam Houssein rose from his chair and read an invocation.

The actors do not always recite their parts by heart, they often read them from rolls of paper.

"O God, look at the disaster with which heaven and earth are stricken! O Kerbela, see how my soul is oppressed! O blessed Prophet, one after the other the messages of blood have been addressed to Thee!" (the souls of the martyred Imams).

¹ Comte de Gobineau has made a complete translation of this play, which may be found in his *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*.

Then he invoked himself: "O Houssein, walk to the marriage of thy dear Kassem, and see how well the blood replaces the henna on the hands and feet of the young people. The Nightingale without wings of the orchard of Hassan, moans from her heart. O Zephyr, in passing through the hair of Kassem thou becomest as musk. Pour the perfume exhaled from the grief of the son on the grave of the father."

After he addressed his nephew, who got up: "O Sun of the Skies of Martyrdom: brilliant Moon of the second of the Seven Heavens, Sun armed with a lasso, Moon armed with arrows and darts. O unique and virgin Pearl of the Chaste Shelter of the Sea of Honour, what art thou coming to tell me? Speak to thy lamenting uncle."

Kassem answers: "O light of the eyes of Mohammed, the all-powerful! O my uncle! O lieutenant of Ali, the intrepid Lion, O my uncle! Abbas has perished! Ali Akbar has been martyred! Here art thou without warriors, without standard-bearers, O my uncle!

"The roses are past, their buds are passed; the jasmine is passed; the poppies are passed. I alone am remaining in the Garden of Faith. I am the thorn, the most miserable, O my uncle.

"If thou art good to the orphan, this is the moment to show it. Let me go and fight, O thou whose dust is my crown."

The Imam Houssein tries to console him, and to keep him, but the boy speaks of the thirst that is

devouring all the People of the Tent, and pointing to the basin full of water, exclaims—

“Cast thy gaze upon the Celestial River. I am dying of thirst. Grant me, O Proof of God, a full cup of the water of Selsebyl which runs in the Paradise which awaits me.”

Thus the conversation goes on, the mother of Kassem taking part in it. Thereupon Houssein hands to the boy a paper from his dead father, in which his marriage with Zobeida is ordered. Houssein invokes Mahomet, Fatima, and Hassan.

“O you all from Heaven, look at us. I am uniting a resplendent moon to a shining sun, and now the word of the moment is what dowry can I give. I shall replace the splendour of jewels by another splendour.” *And Kassem adds:* “The necklace I will furnish with the blood of my neck. The strewing of flowers that his noble feet are to tread, I shall furnish them with pieces of my body. For her laces, she will have some of the colour of red tulips.”

Imam Houssein (to the audience). “Bear witness all, to these excesses of misfortune; bear witness to this marriage of sorrow.”

Upon that all the audience plunged into loud lamentations.

Zeyneb announces to Zobeida that she is to marry Kassem. Then follows a long dialogue between Imam Houssein, the mother of Kassem and Zeyneb; after which Kassem's mother goes to

Omm-Leyla, who is lamenting over the body of her son, Ali Akbar.

Omm-Leyla. "My Ali Akbar, bough without leaves in the garden of my heart, Cypress of my soul!" *And to Kassem's mother:* "O nightingale, warble what you desire."

The mother of Kassem invites her to the marriage, but Omm-Leyla has only thoughts for her son.

Omm-Leyla. "Look at my poor Ali Akbar, hacked to pieces."

The mother of Kassem. "My son has no father to keep watch over his head."

Omm-Leyla (to the audience). "Our young man, my Ali Akbar, has no head."

The audience howled and beat their chests and heads. And while their dialogue was going on the two mothers covered their heads with the chaff; they had very prudently taken the precaution at the beginning of the play to make little heaps of it beside them to be handy.

At last Imam Houssein from his throne exclaims: "Till when are you going to lament, my bulbuls (nightingales)?"

The women and the boys surround Kassem, who meanwhile has seated himself on a throne. They sprinkle him with rose water, put bracelets and necklaces upon him, and strew sweetmeats all round him.

Zeyneb (addressing Zobeida). "O Zobeida-Fatima!

Put on a golden robe. Allah's bride with the wounded heart, adorn thyself. Let us thank God for this new bride who comes to kiss the eyes of Kassem."

Zobeida then seats herself near Kassem with a golden veil upon her head. At the same time Omm-Leyla adorns the body of her dead son as if he himself was about to marry.

Omm-Leyla. "Ye women, who cry in the name of the Prophet, bring hither the nuptial litter of Ali Akbar. The autumn has come. Sorrow hath withered me. My heart is ashes. My eyes are drowned. All the flowers lift up their heads from the earth except my flower which droops its head."

Imam Houssein goes to the corpse, and everyone covers his head with chaff. He makes a long speech to the body of Ali Akbar.

Omm-Leyla (addressing it). "Why art thou so disrespectful to thy father? Why dost thou remain lying in his presence?"

Kassem and his bride. "Ali Akbar, where art thou? In this vile world thy place is empty."

Then musicians playing flutes and tambourines, and grooms leading horses richly caparisoned, entered. Kassem mounted one of them, and was led ceremoniously by the boys and women, with the exception of Omm - Leyla. Flowers were thrown at him; the musicians walked behind him playing funeral airs and preceding a litter hung with black which was to bear Ali Akbar away.

At that moment the scene was supposed to change to the desert, between the tents of the Imams and the tent of the troops of Yezid. The trumpets sounded, the drums beat, and the generals of Yezid, Ibn-Saïd, and Shamr entered.

They wonder what the noise going on behind the tents can be.

Ibn-Saïd. "Can this be the King of Faith celebrating a marriage in this desert?"

Shamr (ironically). "Permit me to take them my congratulations." *He addresses in an insulting voice sarcastic compliments.* "O Flower of the Garden of Creatures, receive my good wishes, and allow me to announce that thou must prepare for martyrdom."

As he said this, he and Ibn-Saïd cried like the rest.

It happens often that even those who are impersonating the enemy are carried away by the general lamentation, and have a sensation of pity in spite of the parts they have to play.

They both went out, and the *Oustad* confided to the audience that the scene had changed, and once more represented the interior of the tents of the Imams.

Then came a charming scene between Kassem and Zobeida, which was really delightful.

Kassem. "God guard thee, for I must leave thee, O my bride." (*He kisses her.*)

Zobeida (returning his caresses). "Thou whose slender waist is like that of the cypress, tread gently, gently. Question this sad moment."

Kassem. "O spray of blossoms. Moan like the nightingale, gently, gently. Breathe from thy heart its passionate sighs, gently, gently."

Zobeida. "O Son of my Uncle, the vapours of sorrow whirl in my soul. Come, is it thou? Soothe the fires of my heart gently, gently."

Kassem. "Thou, whose hyacinthine locks curl like the fruit of the hazel bush, fill with tears thine eyes shaped like the almond, let fall the wine of the pomegranate on the leaf of the rose, gently, gently."

Zobeida. "Draw nigh, remain one little moment : the light of thy countenance is a torch which illuminates us, all. Let me hover round thee as a moth hovers round the light."

Zobeida passes round Kassem performing the ancient rites of respect and affection. Kassem has to leave her ; she attempts to detain him by the skirt of his robe and by endearing words.

Kassem to Imam Houssein. "O King without an army, Sovereign whose words are sweet, arrange thyself the winding-sheet round the body of thy Kassem of the honied lips."

Imam Houssein. "O nightingale of the divine orchard of martyrdom, I rend thy garment as one plucks the petals from a rose. Here is thy winding-sheet. I kiss thy face, that moon of beauty. There is no terror, no hope but in God."

The *Oustad* helped Kassem to arrange the winding-sheet round his shoulders and waist as the Arabs

arrange it at the moment of engaging in a mortal combat.

Abd-Oullah (a young boy, a brother of *Kassem*, tries to stop him). "I thought," says he, "that for the day of thy espousals, I should bear in front of thee a pair of lighted torches."

Kassem. "In place of two torches of joy, thou wilt kindle the lights upon my tomb."

Abd-Oullah. "To whom wilt thou entrust thy betrothed? My heart is full of sorrow for her."

Kassem. "I leave in thy hands my betrothed that I leave thus ill-supported in this desert."

Abd-Oullah. "And me, to whose hands wilt thou confide me, whose head is the price of thy feet?"

Kassem. "I shall confide thee, O my brother, to the hands of our august uncle." (*To Houssein*.) "O my uncle, my uncle, my dear uncle, I charge thee with Abd-Oullah." (*To Zobeida*.) "Come, my betrothed, that I may look on thee once more; that I may pluck a flower of joy from the garden of thy face." (*They kiss each other*.)

Kassem and Zobeida to the audience. "Friends, deprived of those that you loved, weep over the separation."

The audience answered by bursting into renewed lamentations, the women making a whining sob at the top of their voices.

Kassem. "Our next meeting will be at the resurrection of the dead. O sacred family, farewell."

Omm-Leyla. "Ransom of my soul, O my beloved Kassem, why hast thou not bidden farewell to the corpse of my Ali Akbar?"

Kassem to the corpse. "Ali Akbar, son of my uncle, most valiant, so young and yet delivered to death. I, young like thee, am without hope. Be not afflicted, for I follow thee!"

Omm-Leyla to Kassem. "When thou shalt enter with raining eyes into the Garden of Paradise, kiss for me the head of Ali Akbar."

There was a burst of drums and trumpets: a groom brought in a charger; Kassem mounted it and grasped his shield.

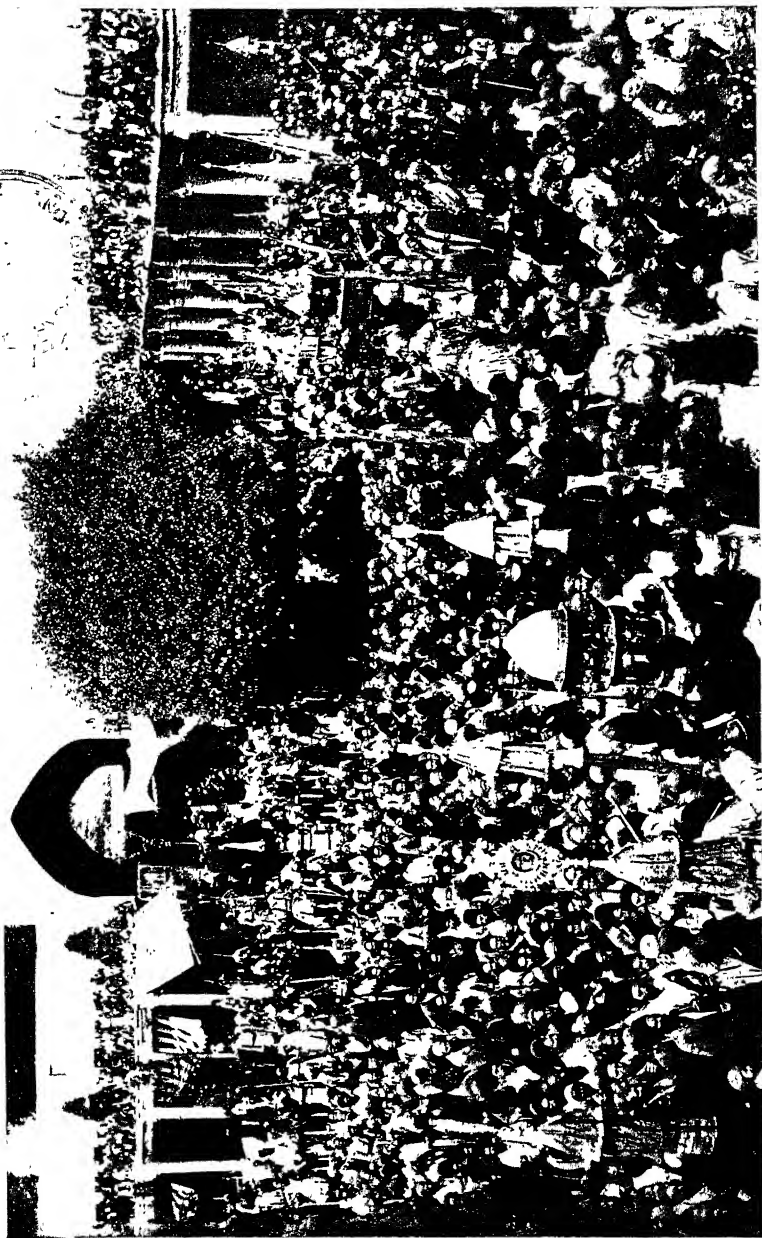
Enter Ibn-Säid and Soldiers.

Kassem, scimitar in hand, to the enemy. "O cunning and ferocious foes, which of you will advance and measure swords with me? I also am a royal Fruit of the Tree. I also am an ornament and a Jewel of the Crown and of the Throne. I also am one of the rays of the two sovereign Planets. I am the son of Hassan, the nephew of Houssein."

Another blast of trumpets and thunder of drums.

They engage in combat, and exeunt still fighting.

Imam Houssein (seated on his throne). "O orphans, cast up from your bodies sighs of sorrow. Lay the Koran upon your heads. Prayers for Kassem are now an imperious need. For he is alone in the battle, and only a moment ago he became the son-in-law of Houssein."



The Sabz-Meidan on the day of Ashoura.

All the women and boys with the Koran upon their heads shower chaff upon their heads.

Imam Houssein. "O Lord God, for the sake of the Prophet!"

All the audience cried aloud for mercy. "*Aman! Aman! Aman!*"

At that pathetic point the planks of the *sakou* broke, and Houssein disappeared into the fountain.

Of course nobody in the audience laughed; it was far too real to them, and the submersion accentuated the catastrophe. It shows, anyhow, the carelessness of Persians. They never take the trouble to do a thing quite right; they are satisfied if a thing will pass muster. The people are so excited that some accident always happens; if the actors do not go into the fountain, the lamps or the pictures fall on the audience.

The whole court resounded with the shrill yells of the women, but as soon as anything like order was re-established, and the *sakou* mended, the performance went on.

A new fanfare was heard, and Kassem came back, alighted from his horse, approached Houssein, and was surrounded by women and boys.

Kassem. "My uncle, thou art King, Kassem is thy Chief of War. Kassem has triumphed. The General of the Syrian army, Azrek, has been overthrown by my sword, bathed in his blood. Honour Kassem with a present."

Imam Houssein. "May I be the ransom of

the strength of thy arm. What present wouldst thou?"

Kassem. "The only present I crave is water."

Imam Houssein. "I have no water."

Kassem. "If I could only moisten my lips, I could kill all the men of Kufa."

Imam Houssein. "By my life I have not a drop of water."

Kassem. "If it were lawful, I would moisten my lips with my own blood, but the blood is impure—to drink it would be a crime."

Imam Houssein. "Dear boy, what can I do against the forbiddings of the Prophet?"

Kassem. "Pray, I beseech thee, that my lips may be just moistened, and I swear I shall overcome the enemy."

Imam Houssein (pressing his lips against those of Hassan). "Go now, and may Ali, son of Abou-taleb, lead thee in the right way."

The mother of Kassem. "Stop, my darling, not yet a man! Thou breakest the heart of thy mother. So quickly, O so quickly!"

Zobeida. "The nuptial chamber has become a chamber of death, O son of my uncle, and so quickly, O so quickly!"

Kassem. "Misfortune! Misfortune! From every side salt falls into my wounds. From one side the lamentations of my mother set my head on fire, from another the tears of my betrothed overwhelm me in a sea."

Kassem to Zobeida. "In remembrance of me, never

put on any green or red cloth. Be always dressed in black, in order that people may say, her husband is dead. However, at the Resurrection Day we shall meet again. I bid thee good-bye."

Shamr and the soldiers appear in the tekieh. Kassem mounts once more on his charger and draws once more his scimitar. The trumpets blare, the drums roll, and the combat recommences. They all go out fighting.

Zobeida (alone). "Thou art gone, and with thee, Son of my Uncle, is gone my happiness. After all, my tenderness, I do believe, cannot have touched thy heart. O, if that is so, do not think of me the disdained who am thy spouse, but see in me what I am also, the descendant of the Prophet, and love me for that."

Kassem (his horse is covered with a blood-stained caparison, to which is attached a quantity of pieces of wood painted red, representing arrows. Kassem himself has on a sort of shirt also stuck with arrows. His helmet has been struck off and a terrific gash is painted on his forehead. His face is streaming with blood and his hands are ruddy with it. He has lost his shield and his scimitar. There is again a deafening noise of drums and trumpets). "O Ali, Master of the trenchant sword, help! O my august ancestor, help!"

He falls down and dies.

Shamr (entering and brandishing his sword). "Fair spouse, plunged in despair, come forth from thy tent. Kassem has come to see thee. Come!"

Imam Houssein. "Quick, Zeyneb, hasten thee here. Kassem is truly married. His nuptials have become the eternal affliction of Kerbela.¹ Come, that his nuptial chamber may be hung in black. Tell his wife to put on mourning."

Zeyneb. "If the wife puts on a black veil, Kassem's mother will expire with the shock. How can I drape with black the nuptial chamber? May Heaven give to the winds the dust of my life. Arise, my dear nephew, at the lamentations of my voice. After all, yes, I shall cover thy nuptial chamber with black."

Mother of Kassem. "Thou, dear to Fatima, O Zeyneb, what art thou going to do? Hast thou learned that they have killed my son?"

Zeyneb. "Cover thy head with black, O my sister with torn soul. May thy life be preserved. Thy Kassem is dead."

Mother of Kassem. "Alas, my fate is reversed: my son, stolen by death, has fallen. Come, young bride, I am in despair. Come, young bride of my poor, so brave son, that I may put a black veil upon thy hair. O Lord, O my God, may there never be another mother like me! Fate has placed my hands in the hands of sorrow."

Zobeida. "O unhappy Kassem. May I be the ransom of thy faith. Come back only for one moment to this bridal chamber, where thy place has remained empty.

¹ The sanctuary of Kerbela was erected in commemoration of the slaughter of the People of the Tent in this spot.

Rub thy hand, gored with blood, upon my eyes, and look what is more red, it or their colour."

Mother of Kassem (to Omm-Leyla). "Salute, O mother of a young man carried off by death."

Omm-Leyla. "I salute thee, my forlorn sister."

Mother of Kassem. "Does thy affection know what has happened to me?"

Omm-Leyla. "May I die for thee—why dost thou weep?"

Mother of Kassem. "Behold at our side this new bride dressed in black."

Omm-Leyla. "What is it? The sorrow has clouded my mind."

Mother of Kassem. "My fresh blossom has been trampled in blood."

Omm-Leyla. "Now thou understandest the state of my heart."

Mother of Kassem. "Kassem so young has been the ransom of thy beloved Ali Akbar."

Omm-Leyla. "Ali Akbar has been the ransom of the Shiites."

Mother of Kassem. "If thou desirest to weep, come, let us band ourselves together, and think from henceforth of nothing else."

At that moment, the play being ended, all the actors got up and, drawn up in a line, pronounced together the following prayer :—

"O God, never part the hand of Victory. This betrothed from the hand of Muzaffer-ed-din Shah, the

sovereign, the seal of the glory of Jemsheed. May he who hath organised this pathetic meeting, and he who comes to weep at it, be welcomed by thee in memory of Mohammed, the seal of Prophecy. May the women be pardoned for Fatima, the men for Ali, cupbearer of the Spring of Immortality : may the young and the old be pardoned in memory of Ali Akbar and Kassem. To all actors, O God, give a merciful life."

There was no applause, but the success was measured by the flow of tears and the quantity of lamentations, which that day had been plentiful.

The day of Ashoura—the 10th of the Moharrem—is the climax of the mourning and despair. Everyone is in black. Men go about unshaved, and with their clothes rent, their shirts torn open on their breasts, and their feet naked. Hordes of fanatics walk about, crying and beating their heads and their chests. The worst of them go about in files bareheaded, with the middle of their head shaved in the Persian fashion. They are dressed in long white sheets, and have swords in their right hands with which they beat the tops of their heads, and make wounds till the blood streams all over their faces and shoulders. Men walk behind them with sticks to break the force of the stroke when they see that it will be dangerous. These files or *dasteks*, preceded by a *Mollah* of the lowest class—for the higher clergy condemn these barbaric customs—go to the houses of the principal personages, who have the bad taste to receive them and make presents to them. They give



Katel, or mutilation of religious fanatics.

large sums for the long white sheets which the self-mutilators have drenched with their blood. Every year nearly a dozen of these unfortunate and misguided men pay the penalty of their fanaticism with their lives.

On that day I used to go, like a few Europeans, to take up a position on the roof of the bazars, looking on the Sabz-Meidan, where all the processions meet. I always took care to go through the back streets, for the excitement and fanaticism on these occasions is so violent that it is better for a European not to mix with the people.

From these roofs I saw all the processions converging. When two *dastehs* of these self-mutilators met, they came to blows, and had to be parted by the crowd. I own that I did not understand the mentality that led them to this behaviour. The women used to shriek terribly when this happened, for quantities of women and little girls come to the Sabz-Meidan to watch that repulsive spectacle. I felt ashamed of myself for watching it.

The governor of the town came and sat under the arches, surrounded by his retinue, and criminals were brought to him from the prisons of the town. For the sake of the Holy Martyrs, he gave them their freedom. As they were set free their first gesture to express thankfulness to the governor as well as the Imams was to take off their kolah, catch hold of one of the daggers of the soldiers of the guard, and slash furiously at their heads till they nearly fainted.

Then came an enormous procession, preceded by standard-bearers, carrying long staves crowned by bunches of ostrich feathers, or gilt cupolas surmounted by the Hand of Fatima, with silk trailers hanging down from them, and platforms bearing representations of the mosque of Kerbela or the tomb of the Imam Houssein.

Then all the personages of the *Taziehs* came into the procession in their costumes of the religious drama. The little Ali Akbar, pierced with arrows, was borne on a bier on the shoulders of men dressed as Arabs to represent the soldiers of the Caliph Yezid. After him, on another litter, was carried a stuffed panther, over which were two white doves, kissing each other, which has an allegorical meaning, like the figures introduced into the frescoes of fables of the Alexandrian Greek period. Then followed Imam Abbas on horseback, transfixed with a lance, and with a hatchet embedded in his head with horrible verisimilitude. The boy who took the part swayed from side to side, as if he was swooning at the point of death.

Kassem came next, also on horseback, pierced with a sword, followed by all the other dramatis personæ.

The crowd watching this spectacle was deeply affected ; they wept passionately, and rent their garments. It was an Old Testament Oberammergau.

CHAPTER XXX

THE BABIS

THE Babi religion has spread widely in Persia, though its adherents have to conceal their faith, which is officially prohibited. Its tenets and history form too large, and perhaps too recondite, a subject to be treated in these pages. Readers can find what they require about them admirably handled in the pages of A. L. M. Nicolas's *Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab* (Dujarric, Paris) and Mr. E. G. Browne's various publications.

To show the inquisitorial vengeance to which the unhappy Babis have been subjected, I cannot do better than give a translation of an article which appeared in the Official Gazette of the Persian Government, relative to the attempt by the Babis upon the Shah's life.

The account, coming from an enemy of the Babis, tries to show them at their worst, but its naïve admissions only serve to bring out the high ideals and heroism of the Babi martyrs, and the cold cruelty and bigotry of their persecutors. The article convicts its authors.

"In our last number, in giving briefly an account of the attempt upon the life of the Shah, we have promised our readers to supply them with the after results of

this lamentable affair, and to let them know the result of the inquiries made to discover the motives of this vast conspiracy, directed not only against the life of our beloved sovereign, but also against the public peace, and against the property and lives of true Mussulmans. For the real aim of these malefactors was, in getting rid of the person of the King, to seize the power, and by this detestable means to secure at last the triumph of their abominable cause, in forcing, by arms and violence, the good Mussulmans to embrace their infamous religion, which differs from that sent down from Heaven, and which does not accord either with philosophy or human reason—which is, in fine, the most deplorable heresy that has ever been heard of, as may be gathered from certain of their books and pamphlets which we have been able to procure.

“The founder of this abominable sect, who began to propagate these detestable doctrines only a few years ago, and who, having fallen into the hands of the authorities, was immediately shot, was called Ali Mohammed, and had given himself the surname of Bab,¹ wishing to give people to understand by this that the keys of Paradise were in his hands.

“After the death of the Bab, his disciples met soon under the orders of another chief, Sheikh Ali of Turshiz, who assumed the position of nayeb (vicar) of the Bab, and had imposed it on himself to live in complete solitude, showing himself to nobody, and granting

¹ Bab means gate.

audiences to his principal followers only at rare intervals. They regarded this favour as the greatest that Heaven could confer on them. He had given himself the surname of Hazret Azem, the Highest Highness.

“Among the people who were attached to him one may mention first Hadji Suleiman Khan, son of the late Yah-Yah Khan of Tabriz. It was in the house of this Suleiman Khan, in Teheran, in the quarter Sar-i-Cheshmeh, that the principal Babis used to meet to deliberate upon their hateful projects. Twelve amongst them, who appeared more zealous and determined than the others, were chosen by Hazret Azem, who had the necessary arms given to them to execute the great act that he believed to be unavoidable. Pistols, daggers, cutlasses, nothing was spared, and, armed in this way, it seemed impossible for them to miss their prey.

“They were recommended to stand in the neighbourhood of Niavaran, and to wait for a favourable opportunity.

“We may refer our readers to our last number ; they will see in it how three of these madmen have taken advantage of the circumstance which presented itself on Sunday the 28th of Chavval, at the moment when His Majesty, having gone out of the town, directed himself, with his ordinary suite, towards the village where he was in the habit of going for his hunting parties. They will see how they flung themselves upon the King, one after the other, firing their pistols

nearly point-blank at His Majesty; how one of them was immediately slain by people of well-known zeal and devotion, such as Assad Oullah-Khan, first equerry of the King, Mustofi-el-Memalek, Nizam-oul-Moulk, the Keshikchi-Bashi, and other persons who were near His Majesty; how at last the two others were seized and thrown into the prison of the town.

“An inquiry was at once made into the case, and put into the hands of Adjutant Bashi Hadjeb-ed-Dowleh, the Kalentar (Minister of Police), and the Kedkhodas of the town (a sort of municipal councillors).

“Thanks to the zeal and the activity that they showed in their inquiries, they soon learned that the house of Suleiman-Khan was used as the place of meeting by these wretches. It was immediately surrounded on all sides; but whether by the neglect of the men of Hadjeb-ed-Dowleh, or by the lack of cohesion in the execution of this enterprise, they succeeded in catching only twelve, amongst them Suleiman-Khan. The others effected their escape, one does not know exactly how. But their accomplices having named several of them, the police, it may be hoped, will soon trace them.

“However, not a single day passed without the Adjutant-Bashi of the Kalentar and the *ferrashes* of the King capturing three, four, or even five Babis, whom they quickly brought before the Imperial divan or tribunal, which in such a case is held in public.

“They were interrogated at once, and condemned upon their own evidence, as well as on the denuncia-

tions of their accomplices, whom they took care to confront with them.

“These interrogatories were made in accordance with the customs and forms laid down by the law.

“We must not omit here to recall the immense service that Hadjeb-ed-Dowleh has rendered to the Faith, to the State, and to Religion, in capturing Mollah Sheikh Ali of Turchiz, in spite of all the precautions that he took not to be seen in public, and in spite of the retired and secretive life which he did not cease to lead till the moment of his arrest. By his flight from the town he had expected to find a shelter against all pursuit; he had hidden himself in a little house at Evine in the Shimran.

“He lived there, surrounded by some faithful disciples, who, like himself, had succeeded in escaping from the house of Suleiman Khan at the moment that it was surrounded.

“It is in this house that Hadjeb-ed-Dowleh, accompanied by his men, succeeded in surprising them at the moment when they expected it least. The Babis were seized, manacled, and thrown into the prisons of the town.

“His Excellency the Grand Vizier, Mirza Aga Khan, had the satisfaction of interrogating himself the chief of this hateful sect. He made him appear before him with the disciples taken at the same time as this wretch, and questioned him in their presence. Mollah Sheikh Ali of Turchiz did not attempt to excuse himself. He

avowed that he had become the chief of the Babis since the death of the Bab; that he had given the order to his most devoted disciples to kill the King. He declared even that Mohammed Sadek, who had precipitated himself the first on the King, was his confidential servant, and that he had provided himself the necessary arms to execute the regicides' project. The number of these wretches who had fallen into the hands of justice does not exceed thirty-two. As for the others, the police have not been able to find them, and it is believed that they have crossed the frontiers of Persia and gone to lead a wretched life in a *foreign land*.

"We impose upon ourselves the task of pointing out to our readers the *admirable conduct* of His Excellency the Minister of Russia on this occasion.

"One of these damnable conspirators, Mirza Houssein Ali, had taken refuge at Zerghandeh in the summer quarters of the Russian Legation. The Prince Dolgorouki, having learnt that this individual was amongst the conspirators, had him seized by his own people and sent to the Ministers of His Majesty, who, touched by an action so in conformity with the good relations that existed between Persia and Russia, evinced their profound gratitude to him. His Majesty himself had his thanks conveyed to the prince, and gave orders that the people who had been entrusted with conveying the culprit to custody should be worthily recompensed, which was done without delay.

"Amongst the Babis who have fallen into the hands

of justice, there are six whose culpability *not having been well established, have been condemned to the galleys for life*. The others have all been massacred in the following ways:—

“Mollah Sheik Ali of Turchiz, the author of this conspiracy, has been condemned to death by the Ulemas or religious judges, and put to death by them.

“Seyyed Houssein Khorassani was killed by the princes of the blood, who massacred him with pistol-shots, scimitars, and daggers.

“Mustafi-el-Memalek took charge of the execution of Mollah Zeyine-el-Abedin, Yezdi, whom he killed with pistol-shots fired point blank, after which the Mustafis of the Divan, throwing themselves upon the corpse, riddled it with pistol-shots and stabs of sword, dagger, and cutlass.

“Mollah Houssein Khorassani was killed by Mirza Kassem Nizam Oul-Moulk and by Mirza Saïd Khan, Minister of Public Affairs. Mirza Kassem was the first to approach the condemned, and shot him with his pistol point blank. Then Mirza Saïd Khan approached in his turn and fired another pistol. At last the servants of these two high functionaries threw themselves on the corpse, which they hacked to pieces with knives and daggers.

“Mirza Abdoul Wahab of Shiraz, who during his sojourn in Kazemein had rendered himself guilty in the eyes of the authorities by inciting the inhabitants to revolt, was put to death by Jaffar Kouli-Khan, brother of the Grand Vizier, by Zulfe-Khar Khan, by Moussa

Khan, and by Mirza Aly Khan, all three sons of the Grand Vizier, assisted by their servants and the guards of the King and the other people present at the execution, some using pistols, others rifles, others daggers of all sorts, so that the corpse of this wretched man was reduced to mincemeat.

“Mollah Fethoulhah, son of Mollah Aly, the book-binder, the man who, shooting at the King with a pistol loaded with lead, slightly wounded His Majesty, had his body covered with holes, in which lighted candles were stuck. Then Hadjeb-ed-Dowleh received the order to kill him with a pistol-shot, which he did by shooting at the exact spot of the body where His Majesty had been wounded. He fell stone dead. Then the *ferrashes* of the King threw themselves on the body and hacked it to pieces and heaped stones upon it.

“Sheikh Abbas of Teheran has been sent to the bottom of hell by the Khans and other dignitaries of the State, who killed him with pistols and swords.

“Mohammed Taghi of Shiraz had horseshoes nailed to his feet first, like a horse, by Ased-oullah-Khan, first equerry of His Majesty, and by the employees of the Imperial stables. Then he was beaten to death with maces and with the great nails of iron which are used in the stables to fasten the horses to.

“Mohammed Aly of Nejef-Abad was handed over to the Artillery men, who first of all tore out one of his eyes, then bound him over the muzzle of a gun and blew him to pieces.

“As to Hadji Suleiman Khan, son of Yah-Yah Khan of Tabriz, and Hadji Kassem, also of Tabriz, they were marched through the town of Teheran with their bodies stuck with candles, accompanied by dancers and by the music of the Evening, which is composed of long horns and huge drums, and were followed by a crowd of the curious, who wished to stone them, but were prevented by the *ferrashes*.

“Suleiman Khan, when one of the candles fell, sank and picked it up, and restored it to its place. Somebody having cried, ‘You sing, why don’t you dance?’ Suleiman began to dance.

“Once out of the town, the *ferrashes*, executing the orders which had been given them, cut them both into four pieces, which they hung over various gates of the town.

“Nejef of Khamseh was abandoned to the fury of the mob, who beat him to pieces with their fists and stones.

“Hadji Mirza Djami, merchant of Kachan, was killed by the Provost of the Merchants of Teheran, assisted by the merchants and shopkeepers.”

The above is the official Persian account. Comte de Gobineau, who was Minister of France to the Court of Teheran at that time, tells us—

“One saw that day in the streets and bazars of Teheran a spectacle that the population will never forget. One saw, walking between staffs of executioners, children and women, with the flesh gaping all over their bodies, with lighted wicks soaked with oil stuck in the wounds. The victims were dragged by cords and driven with

whips. The children and women walked singing a verse, which says, 'In truth we come from God, and we return to Him.' Their voices rose piercingly in the middle of the profound silence of the mob; for the population of Teheran is neither bad-hearted nor much devoted to Islam. When one of the tortured people fell, he was forced to rise with blows from whips and prods from bayonets. If the loss of blood which ensued from the wounds all over the body left him strength enough, he began to dance and shout with fervour, 'We belong to God, and we return to Him.' Some of the children expired *en route*. The executioners threw their bodies under the feet of their father and sister, who walked fiercely upon them, without looking.

"When they arrived at the place of execution near the new gate, life was again offered to the victims if they would abjure their faith, and, though it seemed difficult, means were sought to intimidate them. The executioner hit upon the device of signing to a father that if he did not abjure he would cut the throat of his two sons upon his chest. These were two small boys, the eldest being fourteen, who, red with their own blood and with flesh scorched by the candles, listened unmoved. The father answered by lying down on the earth that he was ready, and the eldest of the boys, claiming his right of birth, begged to have his throat cut first. It is not impossible that the executioner refused him this last satisfaction. At last everything was ended, and the night fell upon a heap of mangled human remains. The heads were

strung in bundles to the Posts of Justice, and all the dogs of the suburbs made their way to that side of the town.

“This day gave to the Bab more secret partisans than many preachings could have done.”

CHAPTER XXXI

SUPERSTITIONS, ASTROLOGERS, DJINNS

SUPERSTITION is of no age, it is as old as humanity. All peoples have, one after the other, been bound to it, but nowhere has it rooted itself so deeply as in the East. The Easterns feel the need of a world that contains all the wonders created by their imagination; they feel the weight of that world upon their heads; they struggle against the perpetual impression of mystery; they look for something beyond the ordinary life; they keep their eyes open to that other world; they seem more interested in it than in what is going on upon earth. They fear to miss God or to be missed by God.

So, in their interest in the mystery, they try to give a meaning to cosmic phenomena as well as to the least manifestation which occurs in everyday life.

More than two thousand years ago, the shepherds who drove their herds across the plains of Chaldea tried to decipher the skies, while the hereditary science of the Magi knew how to number the farthest stars. The extraordinary limpidity of atmosphere has certainly been an invitation to these studies, for in Persia the stars shine marvellously and seem to be nearer the earth. They

look exactly—as the Persians say—as if they were hanging like lamps from the deep crystal vault of the skies.

The Persia of to-day has no less faith in the science of astrology. The *Mounajim*, or astrologers, reading the stars and telling fortunes, enjoy there great consideration, in spite of Mahomet, who cautioned the Faithful against those whom he classes as “speculating upon public credulity.” “Astrologers lie,” says he in the Koran; “I swear it by the God of the Kaaba.”

They have access to the palace, where the richest presents are given for their consultations, but do not disdain the petty remuneration of the poor.

They enjoy the absolute confidence of the grandees, many of whom let them direct the minutest details of their lives, doing nothing without being told if the omens are favourable.

It is sufficient to look at their calendar to understand their procedure: the years are divided into cycles of twelve, the Turkish *ouïgour*, consisting of—

Sitchqan yil . . .	Year of the rat.
Oud yil . . .	„ „ ox.
Bars yil . . .	„ „ leopard.
Tavichqan yil . . .	„ „ rabbit.
Loui yil . . .	„ „ crocodile.
Yilan yil . . .	„ „ serpent.
Yiount yil . . .	„ „ horse.
Qoui yil . . .	„ „ sheep.

Pitchi yil	.	.	Year of the monkey.
Tehhaqou yil	.	„ „	hen.
Ait yil	.	„ „	dog.
Tengouz yil	.	„ „	pig.

Each year has its special attribute. The year of the rabbit, for example, will have plenty of rain; the baby born in its first period will be endowed with a striking cleverness and a great truthfulness.—But there must be a bad fairy presiding at the birth of Persians, who takes away one of these gifts, and generally the second one.—In the second period he will be born *déséquilibré*—without balance; in the third, with the gift of sciences. And so on for each year.

This calendar contains instructions for everything that must be done at the beginning of each month to pass it without accident or illness. When you perceive the first moon of the month of Redjeb, you must immediately look at a turquoise, an agate, some vegetables, or running water; at the first moon of the month of Sefer, a mirror, gold, or silver; at the first moon of Ramazan, a ring, a sword, some armour, fire, or the Koran. And so on for each month.

There are also repertories which show the connection of each action with the day in which it ought to be accomplished, and the result of its being done on such or such a day. For example, to drop a pen, see a snake, hear the singing of a bulbul, feel the rubbing of a cat, have a bad dream, have a bleeding nose, laugh, cry,

sleep, may signify, according to the case, felicity or unhappiness. In them you can find also the best day to transcribe a prayer to avoid the bite of a scorpion, to put on a new suit of clothes, to go out shooting, to ask for an audience of a governor or of the Shah. One day is good for marrying, another for watering your garden ; another is only good for doing—nothing at all. And so on for each day.

The astrologer is the master of the secret science. He advises the traveller about his journey, the sick man upon the choice of his doctor and the application of his medicines ; he can scent a robber, and drive him to such a state of fright that he makes restitution of the thing robbed.

Malcolm tells us that “in 1806, when a Persian ambassador was about to proceed to India, he was informed by his astrologer of a most fortunate conjunction of the stars, which, if missed, was not likely to occur again for some months. He determined that, though he could not embark, as the ship was not ready, to move from his house at Abusheher to his tents, which were pitched at a village five miles off. It was discovered, however, by the astrologer that he could neither pass through the door of his own dwelling nor the gate of the fort, as an invisible but baneful constellation was exactly opposite, and shed dangerous influence in that direction. To remedy this, a large aperture was made in the wall of his house, but that opened into his neighbour's, and four or five more walls were to be cut through before the

ambassador and his friends (including the principal men who were to accompany him) could reach the street. They then went to the beach, where it was intended to take a boat and proceed two miles by sea, in order that their backs might be turned on the dreaded constellation ; but the sea was rough, and the party hesitated about encountering a real danger to avoid an imaginary one. In this dilemma the governor was solicited to let a part of the wall of the town be thrown down, that a mission on which so much depended might not be exposed to misfortune. The request, extraordinary as it may appear, was complied with, and the cavalcade marched over this breach to their tents. The astrologer rode near the ambassador that he might continually remind him to keep his head in one position : by his aid he reached his tents without any occurrence to disturb the good fortune which was augured to result from his having left his home at the propitious moment."

Astrology is studied with the seriousness and the method which would be applied in our country to precise sciences like mathematics or geography, and it is only after years of laborious application that the student, however gifted, can become a master in the art. The Koran tells us—

"God has created seven heavens and seven earths. He makes them obey His voice that you may know that His power is without limits, and that the Universe is full of His Science" (Koran, chap. lxxv. ver. 12).

These seven heavens and earths are distant from

one another five hundred days' journey. All are inhabited.

The Koran also says—

“We have placed signs in the firmament and we have disposed them in order to satisfy the eye. We defend them against the attempts of the devils by piercing the devils with darts. If a devil dares to penetrate furtively in them to hear, he will be pursued by the flames.”

These signs are the signs of the Zodiac.

Mohammedans believe that before Mahomet the devils climbed into the signs of the Zodiac, where they listened to the discourses of the angels and then revealed them to the magicians and astrologers. When Mahomet was born, God drove them away from the celestial spheres, and forbade them to listen to the secrets of heaven. Some of them still try to get in, but are repelled with darts of fire. Meteors are supposed to be the fire darts which God throws at the devils who try to climb into the Zodiac.

It is about the interpretation of dreams that the astrologers are most often consulted. They classify the dreams in three separate categories:—(1) Dreams reproducing or having reference to impressions received when awake. (2) Dreams that are caused by bad health: if they arise from indigestion, which the Persians call *heart-full*, the vision will be red; it may take the form of blood, flames, or perhaps simply tomatoes. If it is from biliousness, the predominating

colour will be saffron, and the vision may take the form of a marigold, a brass basin, or the sun. Melancholia will bring visions dark and black, from the banal ink to the most frightful abysses of hell.

(3) Dreams which are evoked by the World of Similitudes (*Aalam-i-mithal*). In these dreams you see unknown countries, strange animals, and fantastic human beings, and very often these are suggested by legends which take form during the sleep, or you simply see people, or you see things which might happen in the ordinary life but have not happened. And all that opens a large horizon to the interpretations of astrologers. The World of Similitudes has been catalogued in such a way that each human being, each thing, and often each abstraction, has its appropriate form. If you dream, for instance, of a wolf which is drinking milk, it signifies that your enemy knows everything about you, because the appropriate form of an enemy is a wolf, and the appropriate form of science is milk.

But notwithstanding the spell which surrounds the astrologers, they do not always escape raillery, and their science is sometimes proved to be at fault. They can be deceived themselves, as is shown in the following tale:—

A young man was commissioned to engage and distract an astrologer whilst his comrade was courting the astrologer's wife in the *enderoun*. He asked him, "O you *mounajim* of the *mounajims*, having heard of your unique science, I want you to tell me if the day is come for my journey to Meshed, where I want to

visit the shrine of the Imam Reza—God bless him.” The astrologer took out his books and his tables, and began to calculate. After many inspired calculations and inspired looks at the skies, he said, putting great emphasis upon the names of the planets, “Saturn is in Aries—that is not bad; but Venus is in opposition to Saturn—that is bad. And, worst of all, Mercury is falling into the Scorpion! You had better remain here, for your journey under such bad auspices would only bring you bad luck, or perhaps illness, or even death.”

The young man congratulated him upon his knowledge, but added, “Do you know as much about what is going on on earth?” “Why not? Do you want to know what is going on at Stamboul or at the Court of the King of Franghistan?” “No, not so far. If you only knew what is going on next door in your *enderoun*, that would certainly have a more immediate interest to you than the most striking conjunction of the planets.”

The astrologers also study astronomy. The Ptolemaic system is still their guide for the evolution of the heavenly bodies. They know all the planetary systems, calculate the eclipses and know their causes, whilst the popular ignorance sees in them supernatural intervention which terrifies it as if it was a sign of war, or of danger for the Shah.

The apparition of a comet in 1880 produced a true panic; it coincided with the prophecy of an Italian priest, spread everywhere, foretelling the end of the world for the month of December. Many people sold

all their goods and gave the money to the priests for their salvation. Others ran to pay their debts to the Jews; others took refuge in the mosques.

Earthquakes provoke the same superstitious fear. They are attributed to the ox, which, according to the Persian legend, holds the earth upon his twenty-one horns, when in a fit of anger he shakes his head.

The belief in omens, the Evil Eye, and charms, is very widely spread. Three lights in a room bring misfortune; the number thirteen is fatal; when counting one says "eleven, twelve, it is not thirteen, fourteen, etc."

When you hear the prayer-call of the Muezzin, you must kiss your index finger and pass it twice over your ears.

It is bad to sneeze once, whilst a second sneezing is fortunate. Once Muzaffer-ed-din Shah was to come to the races of Dowchan Tepeh, where he had invited all the diplomatic body, all the dignitaries, and a great assemblage, who were waiting for his arrival to begin the races, when H.E. Zehir-ed-Dowleh, Minister of Ceremonies, came and said that His Majesty had sneezed once under the gate of the palace whilst going out, and that he had been obliged to go back and wait for a second sneezing, which did not come. So they could not leave the palace, and the race-meeting was postponed.

The Evil Eye in Persia is no less dreaded than in Italy and Egypt. Though it is not much spoken

of, Persians take many precautions against it. So you see over the gate of a house a pair of horns of a stag or moufflon, or a horseshoe, designed to counteract it. But above all the Persians dread it being cast upon little children. The Egyptians counteract it by never washing the children till they are six or eight years old, believing that a coat of dirt is a shield against the Evil Eye. The Persians do not imitate this procedure, but cover the faces of very young children, and make them wear all sorts of amulets all over their bodies—the most efficient of which are claws of tigers and wolves and lizard skins.

If a mother sees a dead body before the birth of her child, she must immediately sprinkle it with salt, and keep a pinch of the salt to put on the eyes of the child at his birth. If she neglects to do that her child will have the Evil Eye, and bring bad luck on everything that he admires.

A multitude of *Djinns* and *Divs* are supposed to people deserts and mountains, from which they issue to persecute human beings. Though they are not visible, they prefer to take up their quarters in secret places. They have a particular affection for wells, but do not disdain keyholes.

Solomon is believed to have acquired dominion over them, though there is a story in the Chronicle of Ismael-ben-Ali which shows that they sometimes outwitted him.

“Solomon had a ring upon which depended the duration of his kingdom. When he went to the bath

he confided it to one of his wives. One day while he was in it, a Djinn named Sacar, having assumed his appearance, demanded the ring from the wife in whose charge it had been left. She was taken in and gave it to him. He took it and threw it in the sea, and went and sat on the throne of Solomon. He then altered the laws by which the King governed the Children of Israel. Solomon, having looked in vain for the ring, which was the guarantee of the duration of his kingdom, believed that God wanted to punish him. He went out of his palace and wandered through Judea, crying, 'I am Solomon.' But no one would believe him. He remained forty days in that state. At last, having asked for some food from a fisherman, he found the ring in the stomach of a fish. From that moment he re-entered upon his rights, and, having caught the Djinn, Sacar, had him bound with chains and thrown into the Lake of Tiberias."

The Persians believe that you can command the services of the Djinns if once you succeed in mastering them. This is the prescription: first of all comes a great deal of preparation which is a sort of trial of moral strength. It consists in isolating yourself for forty days in the desert, which is called *chillé*, and confining yourself to a spot marked out on the ground, a circle or square, or a geometrical figure—*mandal*. All the time you are in it you must make incantations in Arabic, in cabalistic terms. These cabalistic terms have been revealed by Solomon, who was master of the Djinns.

Like St. Anthony in the desert, he who tries it has to concentrate all his thoughts on the same point or on the same subject, and deprive himself of food, eating less and less every day. After five days of this régime, a lion will appear to you. You must not have any fear of it, and, above all, must not come out of the *mandal*. Then other apparitions follow, and these will take the form of elephants, serpents, and at last monstrous dragons. If the experimenter resists all these frights, and is not driven away by them, after forty days he will master the Djinns. The Persians are quite convinced that it might happen, and they cite persons who have attained to this result. But, of course, you never meet them.

These superstitious ideas do not escape the laws of fatalism which rule the Oriental life. All good, all bad, comes from God, who writes it in the Book of Fate; and when once it is written, God Himself cannot rub it out.

To illustrate this, here is a tale which the Chief Priest of Maragha told me :—

“A traveller on horseback, holding a bag of gold, stopped at a spring to drink, then went away. A moment after, a young boy came and found the bag of gold, which had been left behind by the traveller, picked it up, and, seeing nobody round, ran away with it. But an old blind man who had a cabin close by, where he lived upon the charity of the passers-by, came to drink at the spring. At the same time the traveller, who had found out that he had forgotten his bag, came back there too. Seeing nobody but the old man, he asked him if he

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had not found his bag of gold. The old man answered, 'I am but a poor blind man, how could I have found your bag?' The traveller lost his temper, abused the old man, and said, 'By Allah, thou hast robbed my bag of gold! I am as sure of it as of the indubitable existence of the seventh heaven!' And he was so infuriated by the denials of the old man that he killed him."

A man told that tale to Moses, and asked him, "If God is just, how could he write in the Book of Fate such things?" "Don't blaspheme, man," said Moses, "but learn what is here the cause of God's will. The traveller had robbed the boy's father of all his goods, and the old man had killed the traveller's brother; each of them ignored these facts, and thus was manifested the justice of God the Almighty."

CHAPTER XXXII

BOUND FOR KURDISTAN

ONE of my most interesting experiences in Persia was the expedition I made round the lake Ourmiah.

I left Teheran for Tabriz (where I was sent to act as *locum tenens* at the French Consulate) at the beginning of May with Pierre Loti, who had just been visiting Teheran, coming from India.

We went to Resht, crossed the lake Mourd-ab, and got to Enzeli, a little village on the border of the Caspian Sea, where the gardens full of lilies and the blossoming orange trees made a great impression on the poetical imagination of the author of *Madame Chrysanthème*.

The next day we had to get up at three o'clock in the morning in order not to miss the Russian boat, which was to take us to Baku. As there is no port at Resht and the steamer has to lie far out, and only stops long enough to signal with her siren and pick up passengers from *barkass* (boats), we had to wait for her in a *barkass* outside the mouth of the lake.

We waited in that *barkass* all day long, from four in the morning, so as to be ready to jump on board the moment the steamer approached, but we did not hear

the horn of the Russian boat till six o'clock at night. The *barkass* shot out to meet it, but embarkation was difficult on account of the swell. We had to wait till the crest of the wave carried us up to the "companion" for each person to go on board.

About the steamer the less said the better. The food may have been Russian. The next day, on our arrival at Baku, the Russian custom-house officers, who have a well-deserved reputation for aggressiveness, desired us to open all our numerous bags. The French Vice-Consul had received word from the Legation to be there to rescue us from the hands of these tormentors, but he came late. I tried to impress the officials, showing them letters from the Russian Legation at Teheran, which had been given me for that purpose, but they did not pay the least attention to them.

One of them could speak a little English. I told him what an important position Captain Viaud (Pierre Loti) held in the French Navy, with the same result. As a last resource, and without the least hope that it would be understood, I mentioned that my fellow-traveller was the famous member of the French Academy who has immortalised himself under the name of Pierre Loti.

To my astonishment, I saw the man fairly dumb-founded. First he gaped, then he exclaimed in thick accents, "Oh, Academic Loti!" and, with profuse salutations, bade us pass on without a single moment's more delay.

Pierre Loti was almost as astonished as the official. It seemed incredible that his fame as a French Academician should have reached an understrapper in the customs in such a God-forsaken place as Baku.

Baku is the most desolate place in the world. There is not a blade of green; the fumes of petroleum have killed everything. There is no water except what comes by railway. There are about four trees with about four leaves each in the public square, which have been tended with the greatest care and watered at very great expense.

In the midst of the squalid town may be seen here and there the magnificent marble palace of some oil king. Baku's hideousness is half Russian, half Oriental; it is called the Black Town. Everything is impregnated with petroleum; everything smells of petroleum, everything tastes of petroleum.

We left that nightmare as quickly as possible, and took the train for Tiflis.

At first we crossed barren steppes, dotted here and there with the tents of Turkomans—very wild-looking people, who move about with their herds. Then the scenery was transformed: it grew more and more splendid as we entered the mountains. The railways, after the fashion of mountain railways, made free use of the river gorges; sometimes our eyes were riveted on the wild depths below us, and sometimes they were arrested by the grandeur of the peaks above us as we rattled along.

At last we perceived in a delightful valley the

ravishing city of Tiflis, towering over both shores of the river Koura, and dominated by the ruins of the ancient castle of Queen Tamara.

When we alighted in Tiflis, we were agreeably struck, coming from a Mussulman country, to see unveiled women walking about the streets, mostly beautiful, especially the Georgians, whose beauty is proverbial.

We went to the bazar, remarkable for its filigree work in gold and silver. It is interesting to watch the goldsmiths plying their delicate craft, and to see the armourers forging the daggers and long scimitars and the filigree imitations of cartridges worn by the Tcherkess and Cossacks.

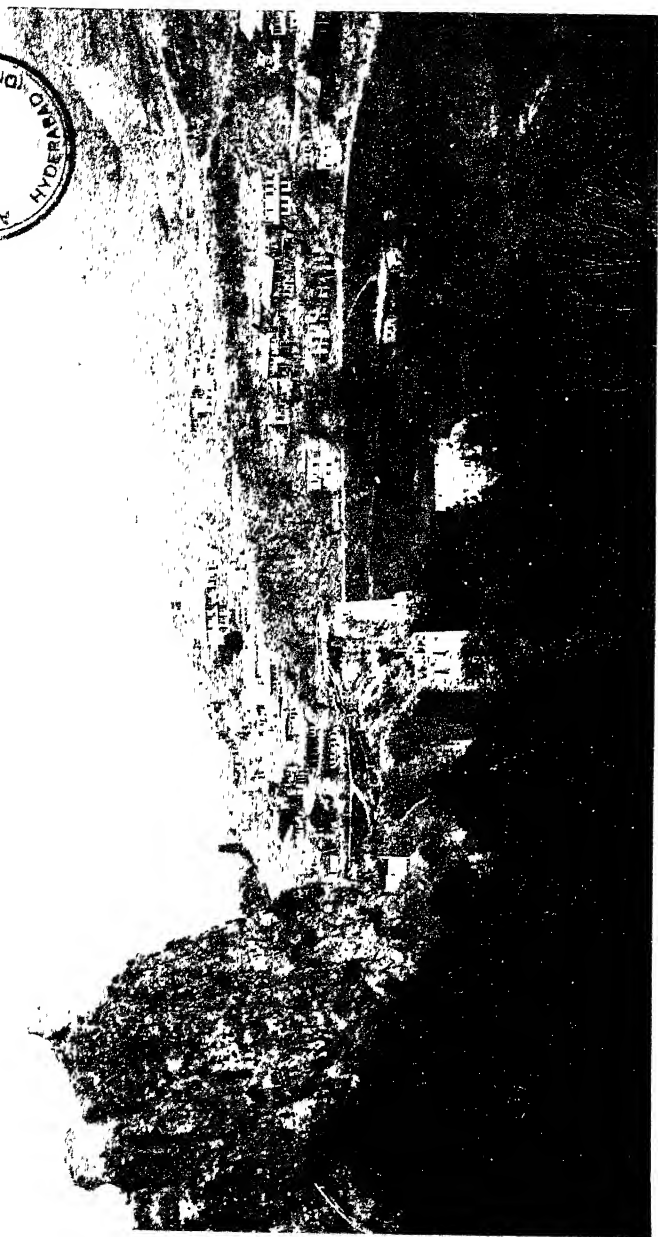
In the Persian and Turkish bazars, all the carpets, silks, and Oriental stuffs were like those of Teheran.

Lambskins are the things to buy at Tiflis. They are of the first quality: they come from a special breed of lambs, and, in order that they may be very fine, they are taken before the birth of the lamb by killing the mother.

It is easy to imagine how interested Pierre Loti was in the bazars, where we made a few typical purchases: it was crowded with national types, which are very varied and numerous in the Caucasus.

The Georgians take the first place for beauty with the Lezghians and Circassians, from whom the Shah and the Sultan recruit part of their harems. The men of these tribes are tall, elegant, active, and strong; they

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wear the Cossack dress, with a dagger and a scimitar, a tragi-comedy, for, since arms are prohibited by the Government, the blades are only of wood.

Armenians, Turks, Greeks, Turkomans, Russians, Germans, and other nations meet in this caravanserai between Asia and Europe. All wear their national dress.

We visited some interesting churches, one of which was dedicated to St. George, the patron of Georgia, the hardest worked saint in the calendar. He is still killing the dragon. It is a large mediæval church, a fine example of the art of this country. It has a dome, and in its architecture generally bears the stamp of the Orient: the grilles of the tabernacle are beautiful and fantastic, and the icons of the Virgin and the saints are flashing with jewels.

After three days in Tiflis, Pierre Loti and I parted, he going to Constantinople, I down the Caucasus back to Persia. I accompanied him to the station, where a deputation of women, who had heard that he was in the city, were assembled to salute him. He was touched by that attention of the women of the Caucasus, though, as he told me, he hated to be made a "white elephant."

I went from Tiflis to Erivan in a carriage drawn by three, and sometimes four, horses abreast. The roads are not very good, but seemed to me marvels after the rough tracks of Persia. The scenery grew more and more majestic as I advanced, and when I

reached Erivan I was confronted by the sublime form of Mount Ararat.

After leaving Erivan, the road passes by the foot of that mountain canonised in the story of the Flood, and reaches Nakhchivan, where I was shown a place called the Tomb of Noah, a very uninteresting little chamber, built of brick, which is certainly not of any remarkable antiquity, and is devoid of any ornamentation except a few tapers lit by "Believers."

From Erivan to Julfa, the town which abuts on the Persian frontier, the landscape becomes wilder and more desolate. I had to stay in one of the post-houses for six or seven hours waiting for horses. It was a sort of caravanserai standing alone in the desert, where camel-drivers, postilions, and carters meet to rest and to give a feed to their beasts. The heat was torrid. Such clouds of flies settled on my face and hands, that it was hopeless to try and shake them off. I shall not mention the smell and the filthiness of the people sitting next to me, and, to complete my misfortunes, there was nothing which I could eat. The only thing I could buy was tea or lemonade. I had practically lived on raw eggs, lemonade, and cherries since I had left Tiflis. Even at Erivan, which is a large city, the menu of the Grand Hotel was so repulsive that I was reduced to cherries and eggs, which this time could be boiled.

Julfa stands on the left bank of the Araxes, which forms the frontier between Russia and Persia. The

river is crossed by two punts, one Russian and the other Persian, which meet at an island in the centre. On the Russian side, the punt worked on a chain and was big enough for the carriage; on the Persian side, it was leaky and rickety, and so small that the carriage could not be taken on it and had to ford the river. Men had to go up the stream to find the ford. It was easy to know that Persia had begun. There were two imposing buildings: one was a custom-house, the other was a guard-house. The custom-house officers were busy somewhere else, and I did not wait for them.

There is no road on that side, but from time to time there were traces of the preparations which had been made for the journey of the Shah. Stones had been put on each side of an imaginary road, but that did not make it smoother for the springs of a carriage like mine, which were mended with string.

After a few minutes of this "road" we entered a gorge, down the middle of which ran a torrent. The scenery grew wilder and more impressive; eagles and vultures sailed overhead. Not a sound was heard but that of hurrying waters. The gorge became more and more confined, until there was only room for the torrent, which was to become our road. Unfortunately it was a good many feet below us, and the descent was at a terrifying angle. The coachman, however, who was accustomed to the route, was not in the least disturbed. "It is nothing," he said. "The worst that can happen is for the carriage to turn a somersault in the water."

He proceeded to tie the wheels for our tobogganning, and while he was engaged in this, another carriage overtook us, in which were two Seyyeds, or descendants of the Prophet, accompanied by two women. As might have been expected, the men occupied the best places. Their coachman derided the precautions my man was taking, and plunged straight down.

It was all right till they reached the water, and then the carriage suddenly turned turtle, and the Seyyeds, whose ancestor neglected to protect them, and the women were pitched into the stream with their beds and their baggage. We had to wait till the stream, which was our road for several miles, was cleared, then we tobogganned into it, and were at once axle-deep in water.

After two days' journey across a wild country, I got to Tabriz.

Tabriz is a town of about two hundred thousand inhabitants, the largest city in Persia. It is at the junction of several important caravan roads, from Russia, Turkey, Kurdistan, and Teheran. It stands high above the level of the sea, and its climate is considered very healthy. The name is derived from *Tab*—fever, and *Riz*—to throw off. It is said that the wife of Haroun-ar-Rashid was cured there of a bad fever.

The aspect of the town is no different from that of Teheran and other Persian towns: mud walls, narrow streets, and vaulted bazars. Earthquakes have destroyed

it several times, and only two buildings remain of any antiquity: one is the Blue Mosque; but the portal, still covered with beautiful blue tiles, is the only portion which remains of that celebrated monument. The other is the old *ark* or citadel, of which only one huge tower is still standing; it is now used for the execution of women, who are thrown from the top.

Mohamed Ali, the actual Shah, who in that town was Valiahd (Crown Prince) had his residence there, like all the Crown Princes of the Kajar dynasty. He is the first Shah to abandon the practice of sending his eldest son there: probably because he understands the evil effects of his life in that Turkish province, which is so much under the sway of Russia, he has kept his heir in Teheran.

I remained in the Consulate about six months, but broke the monotony of a long stay in a town so deprived of interest, and with a European colony restricted to about thirty people, by going for a tour round the lake Ourmiah.

I left Tabriz at the end of September, with my servants Mehmed and Abd-Oullah. Mehmed was my valet, and had the care of my clothes and my bed, which was composed of a folding frame and sheepskin as a foundation, with a mattress over it thin enough to be folded. These were put on a horse with all my other personal belongings, under the charge of a *chaguird* or groom, whilst the pillow was kept in a sack at the back of my saddle.

On Mehmed's horse were the provisions, in a *Khourjine* or carpet saddle-bag. As to Abd-Oullah, he had to act as a cook, and his *Khourjines* were full of cooking utensils. This made up all my little caravan. None of us had a weapon of any sort, which was contrary to the usage of the country, and in spite of the opposition of my servants. But I have a firm belief that in Persia it is much safer for a European to rely more upon the prestige of his sun-helmet than on rifles or pistols. For nothing could save him from the fanaticism of the mob, if in using a weapon he were to spill Mussulman blood. A whip and a determined bearing would be more efficacious, and would not entail the danger of vengeance.

We crossed a plain of cultivated fields; some of them devoted to melons and water-melons, others were tracts of marsh-land full of water-birds. In the middle of the road the dead body of a camel was lying, upon which huge grey vultures and brown eagles were gorging. They did not move until I was within twenty yards of them, and they were so heavy that they could with difficulty find the momentum to rise. They had to make several springs before they could manage to fly.

I galloped up to them and came quite close on them before they could rise. They swooped over my head screaming, and it was rather impressive to see those huge shadows against the brilliant blue sky.

On the next day I had my first glimpse of the lake



The Tendour. Making Bread in Ourmiah.



Cotton threshing.

Ourmiah, a dark blue patch far in the distance amongst gold-coloured hills.

Mehmed, who questioned all the people we met on the road in order to get me information of every sort, told me that as the Imam Abbas was fighting to obtain some water, when he arrived in sight of the lake Ourmiah, which at that time was only a pond, he exclaimed, "What a speck of water! It is not worth while my drawing my scimitar for it," and uttered the wish that it should grow. Since that time the lake has grown unceasingly.

This shows how childish the Persian mind can be, for it is well known by all the Shiites that Imam Abbas, whose camp was surrounded by the troops of the Caliph, could not even get to the waters of the Tigris, which is a six weeks' caravan journey from lake Ourmiah.

We crossed the village of Khoumbar, shaded by many trees and traversed by many streams. The view of the lake in the far distance was majestic; it had a veil of mirage over it from the fierceness of the sun.

The path had a surface of loose stones, and but for the villages spread here and there like oases, all the plain looked barren. The heat was intense. Mehmed, to kill time, had to tell me stories that he had heard in the caravanserai. The distances seemed very great: every man on the road of whom we inquired how long the stage would take us, gave us a different answer.

In spite of a light breeze, which a moment since made the atmosphere nearly possible, and in spite of the beauty

of the lake, grown bluer and bluer in its frame of bold golden rocks backed by undulations of dark blue mountains, I asked a peasant to point out a garden where we could rest. He made us follow him along a stony track with a stream running down its centre, till he jumped over a wall, and opened a little wooden door, which closed a mere hole in the wall not more than three feet high.

This little garden was smiling and cool, with tender green grass, fruit trees, and poplars. I had my bed unfolded under a walnut tree, and enjoyed a rest, looking at the blue sky through the tender green arabesque of the leaves, here and there tinged with yellow.

I heard in the distance the sound of bells; it was a caravan passing in the scorching sun on the dusty track. It was soon lost in the rustle of the breeze through the foliage. Between the peach tree and the almond on my right there was a gap, through which I saw in the blue of the sky two eagles, which without a motion of their wings were describing huge circles. But for this touch of the wilds I might have been in Normandy.

My dream died quickly as I retraced my steps on the stony, dusty path in the blaze of the sun.

On the next day I reached the village of Khosrova, inhabited by Christians, where the French Catholic Mission has one of its most important stations.

I stopped in the Mission and visited the village and the surroundings. The houses of the peasants are very primitive—they are mere boxes of mud, with no windows but the hole just under the roof, which is more chimney

than window. The villagers light the fire in the middle of the floor, and the room is soon filled with the acrid smoke of the horse-dung.

The population of Khasrova consists almost entirely of Chaldeans. Most of them are converted to Catholicism. They belonged before their conversion to the Nestorian schism, which they abandoned in the fifteenth century, thanks to the preaching of a young Chaldean, originally from Diarbekir—the town in Turkey made famous by the massacres of the Armenians.

He had been in his own country converted by the Dominican missionaries.

Crossing the mountains of Kurdistan, he came to Khosrova to work at his profession of dyer. Though ignorant, he soon became, thanks to his zeal and the sanctity of his life, the apostle of his apprentices, whom he converted.

One of them was sent to the Patriarch of Mosoul—the town from which muslin takes its name—to be ordained priest. When he returned, his house was used as a church; and as the Nestorians hated the Catholic community, they had to keep it a secret for the space of twenty years, which they used in propagating their faith. But the Nestorian bishop, Mar-Isaiah, discovered the secret, and, touched by what he saw, went to Georgia and was converted by the missionaries.

The Nestorians are still very numerous in all these districts. One of the remarkable features about their religion is that the bishoprics are hereditary in certain

families. The right of inheritance applied to bishoprics in the Nestorian Church is an innovation of the patriarch Simon IV. about 1450. This innovation caused in 1551 a schism among the Nestorians, one part of whom attached itself to the Court of Rome and formed "the united Chaldeans," having their own Patriarch.

The first and most important condition required for becoming a Nestorian bishop is that the candidate should be *Nazir* before he is born.

The bishop himself does not marry, but he has the choosing of his successor. This is how he proceeds. He gives notice to the wife of his brother that the child who will be born of her will be a bishop. From that moment she becomes sacred, and ceases to eat meat, not only until the child is born, but so long as she nurses him; that makes him *Nazir*.

She does not mind that, for her joy of thinking that her son will one day be a bishop, and that she will be called the mother of "My Lord," is sufficient to reconcile her to the deprivation. But the child may be a daughter, and then everything has to be begun again, until a man child is born.

When the bishop is dead, his successor on the episcopal throne takes his place, as a son succeeds to the position of his father—no matter whether he is educated or ignorant, clever or stupid, grave or gay, good or bad, moral or immoral, an old man, a young man, or a boy.

The Christians, be they Catholics, Nestorians, or

Armenians, are much persecuted by the Mussulmans, who steal their crops and their women. Towers may be seen in each field, where the owner and his family go to live during the ripening of the harvest, to protect their crops against the Mussulman robbers, who are generally nomad Kurds from the mountains.

One evening during the dinner we heard shrieks and a great disturbance in the village. It was caused by a band of Kurds who had entered a house in which there were several women, whom they were outraging. They had drawn their daggers and threatened anyone who resisted with instant death.

The priests interfered, and the Kurds had to go; but they went with great reluctance, and vowed vengeance.

The good fathers told me that this was a constant occurrence.

After calm had been re-established, we resumed our dinner, and whilst I was tasting the wine of their vineyards, the news of the country was told me.

"You have heard," said Father Boucays, "of the war that the governor of Ourmiah is actually levying upon the Kurdish tribes of the Turkish frontier. Last Thursday, that governor, Imam Kouli Mirza, after having pillaged and destroyed eighteen Kurdish villages, arrived at Shari, about three leagues from Khosrova, where he fought a great battle and succeeded in killing the chief of the tribe of Mehemedi, Mesto Agha Sartip—sartip, which comes probably from satrap, 'means a general in

Persian. It is to be remarked that this Mesto Agha has been killed by a Christian of Mavana.

“To-day I was told that the Mehemedi, deprived of their chief, went to Imam Kouli Mirza, gave him nine thousand tomans, and made peace.

“While the Mehemedi were fighting, their allies the Kardaris embarked on their exploits. Seeing Sommai evacuated by the troop, these Kurds came down from their fastnesses in the high mountains to the villages of Anzel, and stole nearly three thousand sheep; and meeting sixty soldiers returning to camp, killed their commander, wounded two others, and disarmed the remainder.

“This shows the character of the tribes against which we have to protect our villages.

“When the expedition was over, Imam Kouli Mirza returned to the seat of his government at Ourmiah at the head of his victorious troops, preceded by a horseman bearing on the point of his lance the salted head of the conquered chief.”

Khosrova was also the seat of a bishop, who was a native of the country but had been seven years in Rome, where his docility had led the ecclesiastical authorities to believe that he would be easily manageable. He had accordingly been made a bishop; but as soon as he returned to his native place with the authority of that title, he had only one idea, and that was to make money out of it. He was very troublesome, sometimes making pacts with the Kurds against the Catholics, and some-

times with the Catholics against the Kurds. He was a Nestorian by birth, converted to Catholicism by the missionaries, and was named Khoda Bakhch — *i.e.* present of God. But to the missionaries he seemed more like a present from the devil.

Once, when he was on very bad terms with the Mussulman authorities, he took refuge in the Mission, but soldiers from the Government came to fetch him, with an order for his imprisonment, which had arrived from Tabriz.

As the soldiers entered on one side, he escaped over the garden wall, went to a peasant's house, dressed as a woman with an impenetrable veil to conceal his beard, mounted on a donkey, and left the village quietly, with an old man walking by his side. The Mussulmans who saw him thought he was a bride on her way to her wedding.

The fathers of the French Mission were supposed to be under his authority, but when it was discovered what a rascalion he was, they asked for protection from the French Bishop of Ourmiah, the seat of the Apostolical Delegate of the Pope.

A report was made to Rome, and, pending an answer from the Propaganda Fide, no more attention was paid to his orders.

A few months later, whilst in Rome, I heard from Cardinal Ledokowsky, the Prefect of the Propaganda, that the Persian Government had imprisoned that troublesome and unworthy bishop.

The cemetery of Khosrova is very old, and its tomb-inscriptions in the Chaldean language are of great interest. The tombs are generally very simple. Most of them are only monoliths, rough-hewn; some of them are in the shape of a ram. This custom of putting a ram upon a tomb comes from an old superstition which the priests relate in memory of the sacrifices of the Old Testament, but which is nothing else but a relic of paganism and of the love feasts (*agapai*) of the funerals of the ancients. The relations, after having lowered the dead into his last resting-place, offer up a sacrifice upon his tomb by cutting the throat of a ram, which is then consumed *en famille*. They take care, however, to send a portion to the priest who accompanied the funeral.

Now, in the country of Khosrova and Ourmiah, these customs have disappeared amongst the Catholics.

After four days in Khosrova, I left for Ourmiah. The country we had to cross was inhabited by several Kurdish tribes, though we were not yet in Kurdistan proper.

A priest from the Mission, who was to go with me, being very much afraid of the Kurds, took one of his cousins to increase the escort. For that the latter put on a Cossack's dress, with a rifle, revolver, and quantities of cartridges arranged in his belts. The priest was also armed in the same way.

The road was reputed to be dangerous; it climbed and climbed until it reached the top of a high hill. From there we could see the lake, so exactly of the



My escort in Kurdistan

same colour as the sky that we could not distinguish where water ended and sky began. This effect was especially striking as we made the descent.

We stopped for the night at Guiavilan. After having passed by many villages in the plain, we alighted at the house of Tamraz, the father of one of the native priests, called Kacha in Chaldean. The Kacha of the village came to salute me. He looked just like one of the Assyrians on the bas-reliefs in the British Museum, with his long beard and hair, curled in stiff waves, and his high kolah of the old Assyrian shape.

On the day after we reached the city of Ourmiah, which lies in the most fertile plain of Persia.

I had quite an imposing reception in that town. The missionaries had sent word to the authorities that I was coming, and an hour out of the town I was met by an escort sent by the governor, with a "beautiful" carriage lined with pale blue satin, on each side of which walked three men with long silver staves. The governor had also sent a *Yadek*—a horse saddled and richly caparisoned, but with no rider on it, led by the hand—a Persian mark of distinction.

Four missionaries on horseback were also there, waiting for me. When I alighted they made me drink some wine from their own vineyards as a toast; and I entered the carriage, which proceeded at a slow pace. All the schools of the Mission had sent their boys and girls to greet me and cheer as the carriage was passing them.

I was conducted with this pompous array to Monseigneur Lesné, the Apostolical Delegate of the Pope, who showed me hospitality in the palace of the Mission. As I crossed the threshold, a Chaldean Catholic cut the throat of a sheep and threw its head over the other side, so that I had to spring across its blood. This is a sign of welcome.

The hall was full of *Shirini*—sweetmeats on trays arranged in heaps with many-coloured papers, which had been sent by the different persons who were desirous of welcoming me.

I spent a most charming week there, sight-seeing and paying visits to all the interesting people and the different missions—the English, the American, and the Russian.

The Christian inhabitants of that country appreciate the good taste of European nations in sending them these missions, and to show their thankfulness, and in order not to make anyone jealous, they stray from one to the other, after they have got all the material advantages which are forthcoming. But in reality they always remain Nestorians or Armenians at heart. They are what are called in the Far East *rice Christians*.

The last Mission to come there was that from the Holy Synod of Russia. When it was announced there was a great movement in its favour, the Russians having always been expected to protect the Christians from the hands of the Mussulmans.

A Nestorian bishop, Mar-Yonan (Jonas), who had successively been converted to Catholicism, Pro-

testantism, and the Orthodox Church, went about all the villages announcing that the Russian missionaries were coming, and that those who should be converted to Orthodoxy would be protected by Russia, and would have nothing more to fear from the Mussulmans, who would no longer have any power over them.

He added that the Lords of the Villages would be deprived of their lands, which would be divided among the new converts.

The country was in a great state of excitement over this announcement. The poor ignorant peasants believed all that they were told. They therefore went in great number to meet the Russian Mission. Monseigneur Lesné puts the number at ten thousand.

All the other Missions were in despair.

The Russian missionaries went to all the villages, and wrote down the names of all those who wished to be converted. These people imagined that the act of conversion made them Russian subjects. For in that country each religion represents a nationality, and accordingly the Orthodox call themselves Russians, the Episcopalians English, the Catholics French, and the Presbyterians Americans.

The new Orthodox converts, believing that they were Russians, thought that they could do anything they liked, and committed all sorts of outrages, which is the practice of the oppressed as soon as they believe themselves to be powerful.

What was their astonishment when they discovered

that, just as before, the Mussulmans gave them the bastinado, whilst the missionaries stood by and saw it done! And great was their disappointment when these same missionaries, instead of giving them all sorts of things like the others used to do, levied from them contributions for the construction of churches and for the maintenance of their priests, while the promised distribution of lands was not made.

On the other hand, the missionaries were very impolitic in their attitude towards the Persians. They spoke haughtily and as if they were masters, and galloped through the bazars, hitting with their knouts the people who did not make way for them quickly enough.

Always ready to use the knout, they were soon detested by everybody, till very strict orders came from Russia for them to be more moderate. But this did not hinder the majority of their new converts from leaving them to go back to more advantageous creeds.

And now their influence is quite insignificant.

The English Episcopalians have a flourishing Mission, as well as the American Presbyterians, who were introduced into the country by Mar Hohanna (John), Bishop of Guiavilan. He had been to England first in order to ask the English to send a Mission, but the High Church received him coldly. He was so displeased that he went straight to the Presbyterians of England, who, in order to give him a greater prestige, sent him to America, from which he returned with missionaries,

who have dominated the Mission for a long time past. Thanks to their rich endowments and their clever administration, they had captured the control of the teaching; but now the Catholics are at the head of the educational movement, as they have more schools.

Though Ourmiah is supposed to be the birthplace of Zoroaster,—indeed, a tower is still shown which is associated with his name,—there are no Zoroastrians (Guabr—our Gebirs) in the country. The population of about fifty thousand souls is divided between Mussulmans, Christians, and a few Jews.

Sixty years ago the Christians were all Nestorians and Armenians; now, Catholics, Nestorians, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Orthodox Christians, Armenians, and what not, are to be found.

There is also a special cult of St. George in that blessed country. They call him Mar-Guiverguis, and show carved stones on the top of a hill called Bakchi-Kaleh, where there are ruins of a town; the two sides of one of the gates are still standing. He is said to have been born there.

The plain of Ourmiah is the most fertile part of Persia, as it is very well watered by a number of small rivers, and possesses a temperate climate. The vegetation is like that of Northern Europe. The word Ourmiah comes from the Chaldean *Ur*, which means country, and *Mia*, water, and the plain deserves its name of the Country of the Waters.

- Raisins form one of the specialities of the district

of Ourmiah. In the villages you see everywhere enormous quantities of grapes drying in the sun.

The ordinary grapes are dried without any appliances, but for certain brands, in order to give them a very fine colour, a curious process is employed. The ashes of the tendrils of the vines are boiled down for a long time in the water. This yields a yellowish fluid, which is poured into a new cauldron, where it is boiled again. Then the grapes are dipped for one second into the boiling liquid, and then spread in the sun to dry—generally on the flat terraces which form the roofs. There is no other special industry, although the excellence of the wood-carving may be mentioned, one of the rare occupations which is left to the Christians. A Christian cannot follow the ordinary avocations—for example, the very necessary craft of the mason, which is practically reserved for Mussulmans.

And here I may mention the *tandour*, which is a feature in the houses of this country. It is a sort of amphora about four feet high, made of baked clay, whose sides are three fingers thick, buried in the floor of the room. A fire is lit in it, and in winter-time all the family crowd into the room where the *tandour* is fixed, and to which the name *tandour* is also applied. When the fire sinks everybody crouches over it, and a huge rug is spread over to keep the heat in.

The fuel used in the fire is the dung of various animals, kneaded together with water like bread. The first thing you see when you come to a village is the

women making round dung cakes which they slap upon the walls to dry. All the walls are covered with them. They preserve the impress of womanly fingers. When they are dried, they are piled in neat conical heaps upon the roofs. Each house has its dung stack, forming a sort of dingy pyramid.

It is in the *tandour* that the bread is baked.

This function is left to the mother of the family. She has a rolling-pin, and flattens out the dough into large circular cakes nearly a yard across, as flat as Scotch oatcakes, and rather resembling in taste the biscuits which Americans call crackers. In making the cake she throws it from one arm to the other, letting it fall on the flat of the forearm. Every time it is thrown it becomes longer and thinner. And when it has taken its final shape, it is spread on a round wooden board with a handle, by which it is pressed against the side of the amphora, by another woman, who has the baking in her charge.

The baking is extremely quick, the cake being so thin.

Besides the different Missions, I was much interested in the visits that I paid to the governor of the town, Imam Kouli Mirza, and his son-in-law, Medjid-es-Saltaneh.

The governor was a charming old man, refined and clever, who spoke French rather well. He was quite full of his recent victory over the Kurds, and showed me photographs taken during the campaign, among

which a photo of the salted head of the vanquished chief on the point of a lance was conspicuous.

It is a custom in Persia to salt the heads of the enemy in order that they may be sent to the Shah or to the governor of the province to show them how many enemies have been slain, because otherwise they would not credit the report. This habit leads to some abuses : for example, when a governor gives orders for certain people to be executed in a place which is far from his seat of government, if those who receive the order cannot find the real culprits, they cut the heads off the unfortunate peasants whom they find upon the road, and salt their heads for transmission.

The most disgusting story of salted heads which was told me refers to this country. It occurred when the Kurds made a raid and ravaged the district a few years ago. They killed a quantity of Christians and cut off their heads, and the person employed to salt them was a Christian, who knew that when he had salted the last his own would be cut off and salted.

It is impossible to waste much pity upon such a degraded wretch, such a born slave, and one is obliged to confess that many of the Christians of the East are creatures of this kind.

Prince Imam Kouli Mirza, who is a member of the Imperial Family, is very fond of literature. He has a fine library, with all sorts of remarkable manuscripts illustrated with drawings and paintings.

He has acquired the reputation of being a just and

capable governor. One of the first acts of the new Shah was to reinstate him in his position. Every post in Persia is vacated on the accession of a new Shah, but of course many of the officials are reinstated at once, on the condition, needless to say, that they send a suitable present, which is really like a tax.

As to his son-in-law, Medjid-es-Saltaneh, I found him a most charming host. Nearly every day he asked me to some entertainment. One day it was a luncheon-party in a huge garden outside the town. At the end of an avenue of poplars, down the centre of which ran a stream of clear water in a channel of turquoise blue tiles, stood a one-storey building, a tower-like pavilion, covered with tiles and arabesques. Lunch was served on the roof under a sort of verandah of delicately carved woodwork and multi-coloured glass. I was agreeably surprised to find that amongst the sherbets were bowls of champagne—no mean achievement in a forsaken place like Ourmiah.

After lunch we went into the garden, where carpets had been spread on the turf under an arbour of apricot trees. Musicians were seated on the grass, and a young dancer about twelve years old came forward to give his performance. He was of a singularly beautiful Persian type—the very type which the Persian painters choose for Joseph, whose name is synonymous with youthful beauty in their country. He was called Yussef—Joseph—probably a name assumed to emphasise the resemblance. He was dressed in crocus yellow with *vieux* rose

velvet ornaments, and whilst he danced, with a background of rose trees in blossom, he seemed to be himself a gigantic flower swayed by the breeze. He performed a Kurdish dance with a dagger in each hand, in the middle of which he threw himself upon me as if he was going to stab me. I could not help starting back, which amused my host highly. That dance was very characteristic, and the sombre music which accompanied it was eloquent of the country.

On another day we went out hawking on horseback in the mediæval fashion. The falconers had brought only the small falcons with the blue tails, as we were after quail. We went into the vineyards, and the dogs worked amongst the vines; but the quail would not rise till we nearly trod on them, they were so frightened of the falcons. They knew as well as possible what was going to happen.

However, we caught a quantity of them. It is an interesting sight to watch the falconer give the hawk a start in the requisite direction with a swift wave of his arm. The bird slides from his wrist like an arrow on its prey, strikes it to the earth, and begins to tear it. At that moment the falconer rushes forward, and first catching hold of the long string hanging from its leg for that purpose, presents his fist, upon which force of habit makes the hawk hop at once. Before presenting his fist to the hawk, he takes the still living quail from its clutches and cuts off its head with a knife, saying, "Bismillah er-rahman er-rahim—In the name of Allah, the

clement and merciful"—in order that the quail may be fit for eating by Mussulmans. For it is forbidden by the Koran to eat a beast which has not been killed in that way while these words are pronounced over it.

While hawking, we rode to the top of a hill, where we lunched in a pavilion surrounded by gardens. This was in a little village called Sir, where the American Missionaries have their summer station, with a magnificent view over the plain and lake of Ourmiah.

Amongst the Christian populations of this country there is one which has the reputation of possessing good military qualities. Since the invasion of the Mussulmans it has always taken the lead in every insurrectionary movement. This is the tribe inhabiting the village of Mavana. As the majority of the tribe have been converted from Nestorianism to Catholicism, Monseigneur Lesné insisted upon my going to see them.

It is about six hours' ride from Ourmiah, on the frontier of Turkey, and in the wildest country imaginable.

I was accompanied by four priests of the Mission and two native priests, Kacha Paulus and Kacha Yussef, who were going to meet the bishop, Mar Thomas, coming back from Mosoul, where he had been to assist at the election of the new Patriarch.

My servants, and a secretary who could speak the Chaldean language, completed the party.

The road across the plain was bordered by willow trees. At a turning a cairn of stones indicated that a man had been killed there.

The country became more and more savage as we advanced, and as we entered a pass in the mountains every here and there were to be seen stones commemorating murders. I was shown one of these huge stones, where a Mavanali, attacked by fifteen Kurdish horsemen, had taken refuge and kept them at bay. Then we crossed a river, and climbed until we got to the top of a mountain, all covered with *chamen*, yellow during this season. After several ups and downs, a huge plain came into view, spreading to the foot of the high dark mountains of the Turkish frontier. Behind an undulation we perceived the village of Mavana outlined against the yellowish green of the plain. A group of trees made a dark patch at the back, while the foreground was occupied by threshing-floors, where workers swarmed like ants on the golden carpet of the straw.

I was to be the guest of the Catholic priest of the village, Kacha Youkhanna (John the Baptist), a native who had benefited by the permission given by the Pope for the converted Nestorian priests to marry. His house was built of mud and stones with thick walls, no windows, only three holes at the top to admit air.

As I entered the house, all the family kissed my hand and raised it to their foreheads.

At twilight my host took us to have tea near the group of trees, and all the young men of the tribe performed war dances. As the night advanced, we returned to the house of the priest, where a dinner was served—on the floor, of course. Kacha Youkhanna sat at my right,

and Malik Atou, the old chief of the tribe, on my left. Wine was poured in brass cups from goat-skins, and my health was drunk, to which I answered in returning it with the only Chaldean sounds that I knew—*Khob-Lokhoun*—To your good health.

Young warriors, intrepid-looking and most picturesquely dressed, with their arms and cartridge belts shining across their chests, stood watching us and waiting until we had finished, to eat what we left.

Afterwards, Malik Atou, with the interesting and wild features of a Corsair, told the story of his tribe. Though I could not understand a word of it—for he spoke Chaldean—I was interested to watch the play of his features and his gestures and the picturesqueness of the tableau of the excited audience, who interrupted him to add details. The secretary attached to me by the missionary, Rabbi Ben-Yamin (Benjamin), took down too all that was said, and it was translated later on by one of the missionaries, Father Solomon, a native of the country partly educated in Rome.

Mavana contains two hundred houses and three hundred and seventy warriors, whose courage is renowned all over Persia. For this reason, when the Government wishes to chastise insurgent Kurdish tribes, it takes warriors from Mavana as advance guards and scouts for its troops, who very often do not need to fight themselves, everything being done by the Mavanali.

The governor of the province provides them with rifles, and consigns to the care of the mayor boxes of

cartridges, which he distributes in time of war. A certain number of cartridges are served out to each of them. If these cartridges are used except in warfare, they have to be paid for by the men who fire them. This is why, as they cannot help using some of their cartridges to shoot wild goats or other game, they long for war, when the count of cartridges is not taken. They find it easier to fight than to tear open the strings of their purses.

The women and children of that tribe are not afraid of standing fire; they mix so much in warfare that many have lost their lives in it. As to the children, they run after the bullets when they see them falling.

The chief wealth of the country lies in sheep and goats, but they are very difficult to keep, because they have to be taken to pastures distant from the village and are often stolen, though the shepherds are always armed. I have been told that when the Turkish Kurds come from the other side of the frontier to carry away the flocks, their practice is to steal under cover of the rocks up to the shepherd and stab him, in order that no firing may be heard. They take a goat, cut its ears, and draw a string round its neck and lead it—then all the rest of the flock follows. One wonders if the smell of blood has anything to do with it, as these shepherds assert.

In this manner thousands of sheep and goats are stolen at once, and then there is an expedition—a miniature war, to get them back. For this reason the country is nearly always in a state of war.

Once a family of these brave Catholic Kurds had come down from its mountains to graze its flocks on the plains round Mosoul. They were attacked by a band of Mussulman Kurds, much superior in number, who massacred them all and took all their flocks, and as trophies cut off the noses and ears of their victims.

Among these was a courageous and energetic young man who had been left on the field for dead. In spite of his grave wounds, he recovered consciousness after a few hours. He could only just crawl back to his village. There, thanks to the care bestowed upon him, he recovered health; but as he was disfigured by the loss of his nose and upper lip and ears, he vowed his life to vengeance, and concentrated his energies on the destruction of Mussulman Kurds.

He lived a wandering life in the mountains, and every time that he met an isolated member of the detested race, he shot or stabbed him. He was very much dreaded, and made a great reputation as a killer of men in this mountainous district, where strength and courage are valued above everything else.

One Friday he arrived in a village of the hated race, and went into the mosque, where all the inhabitants were praying. As he entered everybody trembled, but nobody moved. He glared ferociously on the assemblage, and, fixing his eyes on the nicest-looking and most vigorous young man, said, "I shall be content with this one to-day."

• He went up to him, and as majestically as if he was

accomplishing a sacred mission, he stabbed him. A shiver of horror froze the whole assembly, but as everybody knew that the slightest move would result in death, he was allowed to depart as if nobody had noticed his deed, or as if it was to be considered an act of justice.

That shows the mentality of this people and the perpetual *qui vive* in which they have to live. They say that very often in the night their village has been attacked, which obliges them to place sentinels round the town, who fire at any person walking about in the night who does not belong to their community.

After many stories told by the old chief of the tribe, everybody left the house—or I might say the room, for there was only one (the women went to sleep somewhere else). I was invited to sleep on a platform of wood on which a thin mattress had been put.

The missionaries at Ourmiah had told me that it was not necessary to take my bed with me, that I should find all I required there. I began to think that they had exaggerated; anyhow, as I was very tired, I went to sleep, although there were several noisy fellow-occupants of the room, including my host and his scribe. After a while I began to dream that some of these wild Kurds were torturing me, and that I was being burnt. I woke, and found that I was in reality burning, not from fire, but with the bites of bugs, which in Persia have the reputation of being worse than anywhere else. I jumped up, and thought that the only thing to do was



Buffalo fight in a Christian village near Ourmlah.

to get out of the room. I wrapped myself up in a rug, and noiselessly went out. It was a splendid moonlight night; the crests of the mountains towering up made the scenery almost fairy-like. I climbed on the terrace of the roof, and as there was rather a cold breeze, I walked from roof to roof. No noise was heard. The sight was both majestic and impressive. While I was enjoying the grandeur heartily, I heard in the distance, coming down the other end of the village, a call, which was answered by a voice nearer to me in Chaldean. As I did not understand this language, I did not pay any attention to it; but the call was repeated, and suddenly remembering what I had been told about the sentinels, I quickly retraced my steps towards the house of my host, and just as I was flying down the terrace a shot was fired, and I heard the bullet flatten itself against the wall.

I rushed into the house, and stood up against the wall, as I dared not lie down.

On the next day I presided at a solemn Mass given in the church of the village, strongly built with huge stones like a fortress, a purpose for which it has frequently been used. The church was full of worshippers. In front were the men, kneeling side by side, at the back all the women.

I was seated in the choir, and at the end of the ceremony, which was performed according to the Chaldean rites, the officiating priest laid the benediction on my hands by drawing them through his own,

whereupon the congregation advanced to me and took the benediction from my hands with the same solemn gesture.

I left that village after lunch and returned to Ourmiah. I did not remain there, but proceeded towards Sauj-boulak, the capital of Northern Kurdistan.

As this country is more dangerous, an escort of four horse soldiers was provided for me.

I crossed the plain of Souldouz, which has been given by the Persian Government to the Kara-Papak (*i.e.* black fur caps) tribe, which, unwilling to remain under the Christian yoke, left Erivan at the time of the Russian Conquest.

I saw at the top of a hill called Franghi Daghi (the Mount of the Franks) the ruins of a citadel, which had probably been built by the Genoese to protect their caravan route to India.

At Sauj-Boulak the governor was profuse in his hospitalities. He placed at my disposition a building at the end of the garden of his palace, which he told me had been occupied by the famous Kurdish chief, Hamseh Agha.

When, several years ago, Hamseh Agha came as a guest in the palace to Sauj-Boulak to settle an affair with the governor about tribute, and the governor, as this man was the too-powerful chief of an important tribe, tried to detain him, he said, "My neck is not made for chains," and with his scimitar cut himself free, killing many people in the

process. After having ravaged the country for many years, Hamseh Agha had a miserable death. Amir Nizam having been appointed governor in that same town, sent a deputation to him assuring him that if he would promise to become his ally, he would let him rule over a part of Kurdistan on the condition that he paid a tribute. He invited the Agha to a big fête which he arranged especially in honour of the treaty, and, in order that he should have no fear for his safety, he swore upon the Koran that he would be answerable for his life, and sent to him the Sacred Book on which he had printed his seal. Confident in this sacred pledge, Hamseh Agha accepted the invitation, and came with fourteen of his men. They were received with respect in the camp of the governor, and were entertained in his tent, and smoked the *kalyan* of peace, and signed the treaty. But suddenly, at a given signal, the Amir went to another tent; then his soldiers fired on his tent. The Kurdish chief sallied out with his terrible scimitar, but although a dozen of his cowardly assailants fell killed and wounded, he succumbed to numbers.

The governor also assigned a number of servants to me. This was rather a nuisance, for every time I wished to go out, they all accompanied me. It spoiled my visits to the bazar, where my escort, and also my European dress, attracted the attention of everybody, and when I stopped in front of a shop a crowd collected instantly.

The bazar is very ruinous, covered with vaulted roofs, which half of them are tumbling down. It was only in the Saddle and Mattress Bazars, and in the caravanserai of the silk merchants of Mosoul, that I found anything worth noticing. But the population was the most interesting and the most manly-looking that I had seen in Persia.

What a pleasure it was to watch this crowd, in their picturesque, loose-hanging garments. The ruined bazar made such a striking background for them. Their energetic and wild faces were lost in the fringe of their turbans, which were scarcely fastened, and kept up one could not tell how.

Their waists were encircled by very broad belts, in which was always a dagger with a plain black handle, and their white trousers were so large and so puffed out that they looked like skirts. Their kilted kaftan with ample sleeves was held on by a sort of woollen bolero, white or brown.

The governor, my host, Muzaffer-oul-Moulk, was an amiable old gentleman, with a very bronzed face surmounted by a white beard, who appeared saddened by disillusion.

He had been governor of the province of Arabistan, where he had met Monsieur Dieulafoy and his wife, who were excavating the ruins of Susa. He had been to see them there, for the Shah had ordered him to verify the contents of fifty cases that M. Dieulafoy was sending to France. It was believed that these

cases must be filled with precious metals like gold or jewels, found in the excavations.

Muzaffer-oul-Moulk ordered two or three of these to be opened, and saw that they were filled only with broken trunks and stones, more or less carved—nothing that would have been worth twopence in Persia.

There was also a little pot of earth, very common in shape, like those which the people of the lowest class now use to contain their tobacco. A little piece of it was broken, and M. Dieulafoy had spent sixty tomans to have the missing piece found, which was stuck on with great care and wrapped up. Muzaffer-oul-Moulk asked him with astonishment why he took all these precautions, and why he had spent so much money for a thing of so little value. M. Dieulafoy answered that this thing had a very great value for the Europeans, because it showed how the pottery was made three thousand years ago.

Muzaffer-oul-Moulk smiled, and gave leave for the cases to be despatched without further delay.

A moment afterwards, M. Dieulafoy gave leave to the workers for the afternoon.

Muzaffer-oul-Moulk asked why.

He answered, "Because it is going to rain."

"What makes you think that?" asked the Persian; "the sky is quite clear."

"The barometer indicates it," answered Dieulafoy.

Muzaffer-oul-Moulk was unwilling to believe it. However, a few hours afterwards, he saw a cloud appearing,

followed by a terrible wind, which blew down his tent. And then came one of those flood-like rains which are customary in Arabistan. He was petrified with astonishment, and M. Dieulafoy presented him with the barometer, which he had kept, and showed to me.

He announced to me that he was going to leave for Tabriz, where he was to meet the Shah on his return from Europe. I had noticed that preparations were being made. A governor does not move without a large suite. He travels like a Satrap of the ancient time, with all the luxuries imaginable, amongst which snow is brought from the mountains several times a day. I watched quantities of packages and *kourjines* being prepared for his journey.

Then there arrived a procession of personages of the district, who came to wish *bon voyage* to His Excellency.

Some of them had really the grand air, and were followed by servants holding their *chibouks*. An old man with a noble gait and fine Semitic features attracted my attention particularly : a beard of silvery white fell in graceful undulations on his chest. He wore an immense turban of cream-coloured silk bordered with gold lace, and his *abba*, also cream-coloured and adorned with gold stripes, flowed in unison with his slow and cadenced steps.

Haughty and slender, he picked his steps with his fine feet in their yellow pahpoush over the red of the cracked bricks.

Some of the others had coarse features too much

accentuated, and a wild and malignant appearance; their raven black moustaches, falling like the tusks of a walrus, made me think of the sanguinary brigandage which desolates the country, of wild beasts, or of the companions of the ruthless Tamerlane.

In Sauj-Boulak the women of the lower class do not cover their faces. They wear a sort of toque, rather like those of Toreadors. A great part of the population is Sunnite, and more in sympathy with the Turks than with the Persians. There are constantly troubles about this. There are about two thousand houses of these Sunnites, and only one hundred houses of Shiites, while there are a hundred and fifty houses of Jews. There is also a native Protestant called Shahmashah Shmoyl—Deacon Samuel—who has been appointed by an English lady to propagate his faith. But there are no results, because he is too much taken up with his own concerns. He lives very well. However, there are two Protestant houses living on the money of the kind English lady.

From Sauj-Boulak I went to Mian-Do-Ab—between two waters. On the way I visited a tomb of an ancient Chaldean king, cut out of the side of the mountain at a great height from the ground. Ladders were brought, which were tied together with the girdles of the men, and with great difficulty we managed to climb into the tomb. The mortuary chamber was hewn out of the rock, about six yards high and eight yards deep.

~ In front was an arcade divided up by two columns,

cut likewise out of the virgin rock and with plain capitals like the Doric order. Two yards farther, the ground rises with two roofs and two other columns like the first. In this upper part of the chamber were dug three holes, one of seven or eight feet long and four feet wide, and two others on the left about four feet long and nearly two feet wide. I imagine that these were tombs, but had no means of identifying them. There was no inscription or ornament of any sort. The upper chamber was about ten feet high.

At Mian-Do-Ab, where I arrived with Mehmed before my baggage, the governor would not receive me, as I had not my letters of introduction. I went to the caravanserai, but when Abd-Oullah arrived with my baggage, I sent the letter to the governor, and he was so sorry that he instantly sent me several men with an officer of his staff to invite me to stay at his house. As the caravanserai was very indifferent, I accepted.

I dined with him on the floor, and he excused himself for not being able to give me any pork to eat, because he had been told that Europeans only ate pork and drank wine. But he had been able to procure a large quantity of the latter, and was so disappointed when he saw that I preferred plain water, that he drank all the wine himself. The Persians are not so strict as other Mohammedans about drinking wine. He was very likely glad to have the excuse of my presence to indulge in this forbidden luxury.

After dinner, as I mentioned that I was tired and

wanted to get up early, he ordered the trays and plates to be taken away and the beds to be brought in. My servant unfolded my bed in a corner of the room, and, to my amazement, the governor's servants spread his Persian bed in the middle of the room. But at Rome one must do as the Romans do, and I did not make any remark.

The worst of it was that he snored, and it would hardly have done for me to wake him.

I then regretted that I had not stayed in my caravan-serai. The sun was scarcely rising when I took the opportunity of getting up and proceeding with my journey.

Mian-Do-Ab had been bought by the Shah three years previously from Amin-ed-Dowleh, then Grand Vizier, for the sum of eighty thousand tomans. It is, as its name implies, very well watered by two rivers. This year there was so much water that the two rivers joined in one stream. In spite of the floods, the harvest was very good. The country is mostly under wheat, barley, cotton, and vines.

My next destination was Maragha.

My path lay at first through wide plains, mostly cultivated. Then we re-entered rocky foot-hills. When we reached the top of them, we perceived Maragha, which spread its verdure in the shape of a scorpion at the foot of an amphitheatre of mountains.

The limpidity of the atmosphere deceived me, so that I thought we were quite close to it, while we were still two hours away.

When we entered the town we had to pass monotonous stretches of gardens for an hour or so. They were enclosed with walls of unmortared stones. When we arrived at the vice-governor's house, he was not expecting me so soon, and apologised profusely for not having sent the usual *esteghbal* or escort to meet me. He reproached me with not having sent him notice of my arrival. It had not been possible, because the wires of the telegraph had been cut by the nomad tribes of Shahsevids, who were camping in the country and causing grave disturbances.

Maragha belongs to Assef-es-Saltaneh, the Sahab-Jam, the Master of All, what we should call the Minister of Transport, one of my Teheran friends, who had written to the vice-governor, Nassir Daftar, to show me special hospitality.

The latter gave me an apartment next to his own in the Government House. All the front of the room consisted of windows made on the English principle, but with sashes of carved wood. It looked out on to the courtyard, where the prisoners were brought before the governor to be tried.

It was there that I made studies upon the way justice is administered in Persia; and as I was shocked at the excessive corporal punishments, I asked Nassir Daftar to stop them while I was his guest. He acceded to my wish, exclaiming, however, "But how is this? Have you no justice in your country?"

Maragha was a seat of the Mongol power. Hufak

Khan, the grandson of Jenghiz Khan, after having exterminated the Assassins and conquered the Caliphs of Bagdad, established himself in this spot. He chose this site because of the scorpion shape of the valley, which he considered of good omen. He had a Christian wife, who liked to be surrounded by philosophers, wise men, and priests. There are still some remains of the university founded by Hulaku Khan, and I went on the top of a hill near the city where formerly stood the observatory of the celebrated astronomer, Nasr-ed-din, who invented or formed the table of the Ilkhani. But I found nothing except vague foundations.

Several monuments of that period remain, made of bricks with beautiful tiles, which still preserve their brilliant colours. But as the Government has taken no interest to the place, anyone who likes helps himself to them. Two of these towers are the tombs of Hulaku and his queen. They are in private gardens. The tower of the King is occupied by a stable. I climbed up to the first floor, but could see nothing of the decorations, which must have been there, and have been taken away by people. On the roof were storks' nests. These birds are much venerated in the country, for they are supposed to bring good luck.

Here I made the acquaintance of an interesting chief priest, with whom I had several conversations about religion. I was also interested in the fact that he had already twenty wives and concubines (the number of the former being limited to four). It was the custom

of this Solomon to sit in his garden surrounded by all his women, who were a garden in themselves, for each one of them dressed in a different gorgeous hue, representing some favourite flower.

While a tower was being erected for him in his garden on the side of a hill, old potteries were discovered, with vessels as black as the Etruscan bucchero, very solid and hard, and with primitive geometrical designs on them. One of them was of a most extraordinary pattern. Out of a bowl, shaped something like a cocoanut, came a handle at the back and a ram's-nose spout, with a canal smaller in diameter than a lead pencil feeding it. I have looked in vain for its counterpart, even in museums like the Louvre. Seeing my admiration, the old priest made me a present of it. The ornamentation suggested very primitive Greek pottery. It is the finest object in my Oriental collection.

On the day before my departure, I heard that the nomad tribes of Shahsevents which infested the country had been plundering a caravan on the road to Tabriz. The governor of Maragha insisted on my taking a strong escort, and asked me not to take the ordinary road, but to make a detour to avoid the Shahsevents. As this detour would have made my journey a whole day longer, and as it was my last stage before getting back to European society and comforts, and especially because the Shah was on his way back from Europe and I did not wish to miss being at Tabriz during



Prehistoric jug found at Maragha, and an embroidery from Bokhara.

his stay, I decided that I should take the shortest route in spite of the Shahsevents. But I promised to travel only during the daytime.

We started very early in the morning, with an escort of martial-looking horsemen. The country was as wild as that near Mavana, and the road was only a vague caravan track. I followed the telegraph poles : the surest means to prevent my missing my way. We trotted our horses along until two o'clock, when we reached a village, where we had lunch and baited our horses. The keeper of the caravanserai tried to persuade me to remain there for the night, pointing out all the dangers of the road, and telling me about the murders daily perpetrated by the Shahsevents. But I was more nervous about not getting home quickly, so I ordered my horse to be got ready—it had not been unsaddled.

My servants were soon prepared, but it was more difficult to make the escort start with me. They pretended that their horses were not sufficiently rested, and my promises of large backsheesh only decided one of them to come along. The others promised to follow a short time after.

We were soon on the path again. It grew more and more monotonous as we penetrated farther into the mountains.

We were to reach a fortified village before sunset, where we were to spend the night.

We had not met a soul, we had not heard a noise,

nor perceived the ghost of a Shahsevend. The twilight soon passed, as it does in the East, and a bright starlit night without moonshine overtook us. It was light enough to guess things without seeing them. My servants became very nervous, and the horseman who was riding in front called Mehmed to him and talked to him earnestly in Turkish for a few moments. When he had finished I asked Mehmed to tell me the subject of their conversation. It was only after much hesitation that he explained to me that the horseman had confided to him that we were approaching a spot called the *Khiaban* (avenue), a name given to a defile renowned for its ambushes for caravans. He added that my obstinacy in insisting on pursuing our journey had put their lives in jeopardy, and that they would be "upon my head."

The moment was a solemn one. We rode in single file, the path being extremely narrow. In front was our "escort," I came next, followed by Mehmed and Abd-Oullah, and the *chaguird* brought up the rear. I felt the weight of those four lives on my head, when suddenly we heard the trampling of horses coming from the front. Instantly the "escort" slipped away on our right and was lost in the hills.

I guessed from that that there was some danger, and that was the reason why I had not insisted upon the rest of the escort accompanying us. The clatter of hoofs drew nearer, and I perceived the shadows against the clear night sky of several horsemen, with

their rifles planted on their right knees ready to be used. Things were critical. Were they peaceful travellers like ourselves, or were they the dreaded Shahsevents? I had scarcely time to think of that, when the first horseman alighted and caught hold of my bridle.

In my astonishment, without any earthly reason, I gave the Mussulman formula of salutation, with cordiality in my voice, as if I was addressing a friend, "*Salam aleikoum!*"

I can give no explanation of what compelled me to act thus, I can hardly even describe my feelings. I was not exactly frightened. I felt more like a man condemned to be hung at the moment when the cord is going round his neck, when there is no further occasion to be frightened because the end has come.

The man stared at me without saying anything, and turned to his companions, with whom he exchanged some words in a low voice. After a brief parley he remounted his horse, and addressing me, said, "*Khoda Hafiz*" (God guard thee), and they filed past us and were lost in the night. I counted them as they passed: they were seven.

At that moment fear fell upon me. A cold sweat burst from my forehead.

A ghastly idea obsessed me that they had let us pass only to shoot us down from behind at their leisure. At that moment a fresh clatter of hoofs came from our right.

A shiver ran down my spine, but there was no call

for it, because it was only the "escort" coming back, who, as I was informed afterwards, gave the excuse that it was for my good that he had fled, to take a position on a hill from which he could shoot down my assailants; for if he had remained with us, as he was the only one armed, he would have been overpowered in a second.

He resumed his post at the head of the cortège, and we were soon in the dreaded *Khiaban*.

It was a narrow gorge between rocky hillsides. My imagination was so possessed that I saw in every bush a crouching rifleman, and the few minutes of the passage of the *Khiaban* seemed like hours.

As we emerged and the darkness became less intense, my horse swerved violently, and I perceived on the side of the path two pale spots, which I made out to be the bodies of the two poor camel drivers who had been killed in the assault on the caravan of which the keeper of the caravanserai had been speaking.

A few hundred paces farther on was a guard-house, whose business it was to look after the safety of this defile; but the guards were comfortably bolted in, and we had to knock at the door and prove our respectability before they would trust us in.

They looked far worse than Shahsevents could be imagined to look. However, after much parleying and promises of large backsheesh, I succeeded in persuading two of them to accompany me to the village, which I had expected to reach before sunset, but which was still one hour farther.